

Horizon

VIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

COMMENT FROM SCOTLAND

by Cyril Connolly

THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS

by Francis Scarfe

MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE

by Fred Urquhart

NOVEL AND THE MODERN WORLD

by Edwin Muir

THE SCISSORS

by Arturo Barea

NOTES ON CIVILIANS AT BAY—II

by Brian Howard

SOME NOTES ON ENGLISH BAROQUE

by Terence Heywood

POEMS *by W. R. Rodgers and George Barker*

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Edited by Cyril Connolly

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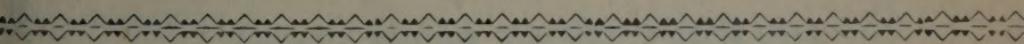
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HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
COMMENT	212
STORMY DAY	<i>W. R. Rodgers</i> 221
SEVEN PACIFIC SONNETS	<i>George Barker</i> 222
THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS	<i>Francis Scarfe</i> 226
MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE	<i>Fred Urquhart</i> 240
THE NOVEL AND THE MODERN WORLD	<i>Edwin Muir</i> 246
THE SCISSORS	<i>Arturo Barea</i> 253
NOTES ON CIVILIANS AT BAY—II	<i>Brian Howard</i> 257
SOME NOTES ON ENGLISH BAROQUE	<i>Terence Heywood</i> 267
SELECTED NOTICES	271

*There is a reproduction of two paintings by Ben Nicholson
facing page 224*

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COMMENT

To go abroad; after three weeks of being bombed, to the last foreign country where no visa is required, has been my good fortune. We crossed the frontier in the evening after a long day's travel, and a Customs examination so perfunctory as to be almost non-existent; the air was fresh and pure, and we reached the capital through austere green hills past a lonely coast with occasional rocky islands. It is a city of the right size—half a million people—enough to provide a metropolitan variety, and yet keep the countryside at the door. There is everything for the escapist—a picturesque old town, an eighteenth-century new one, a mediæval castle, a renaissance palace, a university quarter, bookshops, cafés, and a sea-food restaurant. The people are kindness itself, and many of them understand English, even if they do not speak it, which is fortunate, for it is extremely difficult to master their language, and so my phrase-book is most helpful. Arles (earnest money); Jougs (scold's bridle); Lith (section of an orange); and Quaich (two-eared drinking cup) are useful words, even in wartime. The newspapers, however, except the Polish one, are easy to grasp and make no pretence of being neutral. The town, with its Piraeus and Phaleron, Acropolis, Lycabettus, and Hymettus, is supposed to resemble Athens, though I found it more like Budapest without the Danube. The old town on the hill, with its quiet streets and government offices, its stunted trees, is like Buda, the Corso with its hotels and cafés, its sprinkling of Czechs and Poles is like Pest. The air is extraordinarily bracing and makes up *aiblins*, for the smoky, northern light. I was determined to enjoy everything, but, as I explored more and more quarters of the city with the *Guide Bleu*, misgivings grew. A sixpenny pamphlet, *Scotland's Dilemma, Province or Nation?* by John Torrence, explained a great deal. The population has declined, unemployment risen, income fallen, production, shipping, industry diminished, health deteriorated, culture has been neglected, infant mortality, adult emigration increased. 'Nationalists believe that all these economic factors in Scotland form one unbroken chain of cause and effect: political absorption—loss of economic and financial individuality—intellectual dependence—economic and social decline. We say that Scotland sinks because it is tied to a

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partner politically predominant and economically more powerful. We seek the regeneration of Scotland, and not in the economic sense alone.'

Torrence goes on to demand Scottish Home Rule, and plead the benefits of a Scottish parliament, Scottish diplomatic service, protection of Scottish industries, restriction of Irish immigration and Scottish emigration, and he draws an unfavourable comparison between the civilized amenities of Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen, which are capitals, and Edinburgh, which, though their equal in population and historical background, is not. I am always convinced by what I read, but a few minutes later the conviction wears off. I find now that Torrence's intense pleading for Scottish nationalism is less sensible than his purely destructive criticism based on slum and unemployment statistics. Also, Edinburgh, dependent on London, lacks the civic splendours of capitals like Oslo and Copenhagen, but remains free. Further light on the Scottish situation is thrown by a curious poem, too long to print whole, by Adam Drinan, which came into our office, and in which the poet laments the decay of the Highlands, blaming Capitalism (i.e. England) in the form of the landlords, with their enclosures, the steam trawlers, who ruin the off-shore fishermen, and so on. These issues are very close to the war and very close to artists and intellectuals, who have suffered considerably from the centralization of the last fifty years. The issue can be summed up as the struggle between natural man and economic man.

Natural man clings to certain units, such as the family, certain forms of life (home, village, possession of the soil, country town, agriculture, small industries, active rather than spectator pleasures, and a part in local society and politics). I call him natural man because his way of living is in harmony with nature, or rather with man's nature for the last two thousand years. Economic man, however, is governed by forces over which he has no control, and which, though deleterious, seem inevitable; by the requirements of trade and the movements of gold, by developments of science (such as the supersession of coal by electricity, or of the cochineal bug by the chemical dyes), forces which remove the *raison d'être* of millions and throw their lives into distress and disorder. The economic man is always being more and more centralized; he becomes the slave of international capitalism, which sucks the colour out of local life but brings him Hollywood for sixpence.

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and leaves a grapefruit on his plate. Science and scientific capitalism have made the world of the natural man, the world of geography and history, almost meaningless; it is doomed, as the Sanctity of Chartres or a West African Ju-Ju Tree is doomed by the local air-field, or the whale by the floating blubber factory. Einstein attributes the present war to the fact that science has progressed faster than morality, which is another way of putting

And one might add that ninety people out of a hundred would not blame morality for going too slow, but science for going too fast.

For the tragedy lies in the fact that economic man is obedient to laws which, although of his own creating, are inevitable (you cannot, for instance, stop the drift from the country to the town) and consequently, since animal man resists these laws he is bound to submit. This gives his attempts to control them a reactionary quality; however they may begin, they must end in brutality and defeat. Fascism is a classic example of the state trying to put the clock back in favour of the natural man, but at the price of political slavery in return for nationalist pride. Anti-semitism, and anti-slave-democracy are forms in which the natural man's desire for a generation is exploited. The Catholic Church is the most intelligent champion of the natural man, for it offers the nearest equivalent to the Roman *pietas*, the religious feeling which binds man in harmony to his environment and makes him content with his lot. Yet in Spain the bishops who blessed Franco's cannon revealed the structure of the humanism of Holy Church. Pétain is a nice example, for he is sympathetic to Fascism as a noble patriotic force, and to the Church as a spiritual one. He blames the fall of France on the lack of babies, the lack of babies on the pursuit of pleasure, the pursuit of pleasure on the easy and widely distributed profits of materialism. The sentiment of order is an essential factor in the Latin genius; if from our point of view Pétain appears a senile traitor, nevertheless his groping towards clerical, agricultural, disciplined France, free from communist ideas, American capital and English tourists, and linked to the Pope and the two *soeurs latines*, Spain and Italy, reflects an instinctive Gallic tendency. It must fail, however, because it defies economic man, because materialism or the principles of 1789, or wish international freemasonry, or whatever you like to call

them, are invincible. The Japanese postponed their Westernization till the last possible moment, with what results! and every step backward towards the France of St. Louis which Pétain takes makes a Communist Revolution more certain. For the strength of Socialism and Communism is that they accept economic man his cinema and his grapefruit, his urbanization, birth-control, centralized bureaucracy, and materialism, and try to give a soul to them. It is for this reason that Pétain chooses to de-industrialize France, or Franco Spain, in order to desocialize them. But, if you lower a nation's standard of living sufficiently you get a revolution; in France, this revolution may be Communist because French democratic leaders from Daladier to Blum have been found either inefficient or corrupt, and the only alternative régime which offers a *chef d'état* of integrity is a limited monarchy. A Communist France would be a puzzle to England, Germany, and Russia, but unless Germany drastically occupies all France, it is liable to happen, for Pétain's programme of moral regeneration can reanimate a defeated nation, but is incapable of solving the economic problems of defeat, and General De Gaulle's militant democratic movement can only function in the colonies where democracy has not been discredited, and which permit themselves the luxury of the fighting spirit.

Economically and scientifically, the world is a single unit; the winner of this war, either Anglo-Saxony or the Axis, will have to administer it as a unit, otherwise there will have been no progress to justify the slaughter, and with a universal sense of disappointment the nations will relapse back to war. The propaganda which wins the war must guarantee to the natural man his dignity, his right to a full life, and to the economic man his comfort, his right to the products of civilization and the benefits of science. At the moment, England administers the Empire on these lines (though the utter poverty of the cultural impulse in the Empire cannot be too lamented), and Hitler is endeavouring to administer Europe, but at the expense of economic man, whose standard of living is being lowered, and without being able as yet to guarantee anything but the Gestapo to the natural man. We must therefore export bread and liberty in equal doses if we are to bring Europe round to our side, and the time element is all-important. If Hitler gets his new Europe going properly, with barter replacing gold (and barter is as decentralizing as gold is the opposite) and with

the nations playing the cultural and ethnographical rôles allotted to them, while the Vatican provides the slave states with philosophy of life, then England can be made to look like an intolerable disruptive pirate nuisance in the eyes of Europe. We would become the real aliens, the Protestant dissidents, the heretics of the North. In Hitler's favour is the fact that he has the will and ambition to govern Europe, and that Rome, Berlin and Munich are the natural places to do it from. But as long as the blockade is effective he is compelled to loot, and while he has to loot the conquered countries, his propaganda must fail. A year ago the war seemed a struggle between the nineteenth century and the twentieth, France and Poland and Chamberlain's England were not contemporary countries, and so seemed bound to lose. Democracy is a nineteenth-century organization of human beings, incorporating the principles of 1789 with the discoveries of the industrial revolution, Fascism is a highly modern adaptation of the seventeenth-century despotic state. Democracy as we know it in many ways decadent, its forms are antiquated, its leaders cut off from it, and its system of representation, admirably suited to small communities where all can share in the responsibility of government, is breaking down. To win the war England must be completely twentieth century, it must bring Democracy up to date, eliminate inefficiency at the top and apathy at the bottom, and expose the primitive fallacies behind Fascism which its fanaticism and organization disguise. We must prove that grimy smog-dwelling, coal-burning England is more advanced than the oil- and electricity-driven tyrannies of Europe, we must recognize that our present government is one of transition, our class distinctions and party politics obsolete, that where the *élan* is, the power will follow.

And Edinburgh? The problem is not solved. I can imagine it as I would like to see it, with the railways electrified, the coal-fire banished, the buildings cleaned and the air cleared, a row of embassies in George Street, the planes of many countries in the airport, liners at Leith, the old town, outwardly preserved, inwardly cleaned up and becoming a teeming *Cité Universitaire*, a decent entertaining in Holyrood, a hotel instead of a barracks in the castle, and an intense cultural activity returning to the squares and terraces where once Jeffrey and Christopher North fulminated against Tennyson and Keats!

The Scotch, repatriated from all over the Empire, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir John Anderson, Sir John Reith, bringing their money, their talent, their industry back to the country (with Duncan Grant at the National Gallery, and Sir James Jeans at the Observatory), would give the nation the best gardens, cooking, engines, civil service in the world. Sir Kenneth Clark would run the Interior, Malcolm MacDonald the Scotch Colonial Empire, and Scandinavian League of Nations. The Highlands, except for the National Parks, would hum with activity, and no one would pay any attention to a pamphlet, *England's Dilemma, Province or Nation?*, which would be confiscated by kilted Customs-officers at the frontier when found on passengers from London, where education languishes, civil services break down, amenities are inferior to Oslo and Copenhagen, population dwindling, slums and mortality on the increase, 'because it is tied to a partner politically predominant and economically more powerful'.

None of this can come true until the problem of reconciling the material benefits of planned world economy with the human values of regionalism can be dealt with. All one can say is that Edinburgh cries out to be a capital, but that while it pays every Scotsman from the Primate downwards to take their brains elsewhere, it can never become one. We can interfere with economic laws to the extent of preventing anyone from growing their own tobacco or making their own gin, an art colony can be preserved like a deer forest, the economic laws (though they cannot be flouted) can be adapted. True, no regional movement can succeed if it is either deliberately backward or artificially romantic, but there is nothing artificial about being bombed, and Hitler by closing Europe to the English tourist and making an occasional week out of London desirable may have started that return to the old provincial capitals, which no Act of Parliament or other recommendation could set under way. Children for the deer forests, refugee professors and students for the universities, Channel Island gardeners for the West, are a beginning which may gradually but legitimately bring back the English bards and Scotch Reviewers to Buccleugh Place, and artists to a country where there still exists a recognizable harmony between the landscape and the form and materials of the buildings in it.

Le temps va ramener l'ordre des anciens jours.

W. R. RODGERS

STORMY DAY

O look how the loops and balloons of bloom
Bobbing on long strings from the finger-ends
And knuckles of the lurching cherry-tree
Heap and hug, elbow and part, this wild day,
Like a careless carillon cavorting;
And the beaded whips of the beeches splay
And dip like anchored weed round a drowned rock;
And hovering effortlessly the rooks
Hang on the wind's effrontery as if
On hooks, then loose their hold and slide away
Like sleet sideways down the warm swimming sweep
Of wind. O it is a lovely time when
Out of the sunk and rigid sumps of thought
Our hearts rise and race with new sounds and sights
And signs, tingling delightedly at the sting
And crunch of springless carts on gritty roads,
The caught kite dangling in the skinny wires,
The swipe of a swallow across the eyes,
Striped awnings stretched on lawns. New things surprise
And stop us everywhere. In the parks
The fountains scoop and flower like rockets
Over the oval ponds whose even skin
Is pocked and goosefleshed by their niggling rain
That frocks a naked core of statuary.
And at jetty's jut, roped and ripe for hire,
The yellow boats lie yielding and lolling,
Jilted and jolted like jellies. But look!
There! Do you see, crucified on palings,
Motionless news-posters announcing
That now the frozen armies melt and meet
And smash! Go home now, for, try as you may,
You will not shake off that fact to-day.
Behind you limps that dog with tarry paw,
As behind him, perfectly-timed, follows
The dumb shadow that mimes him all the way.

GEORGE BARKER

SEVEN PACIFIC SONNETS

[From a cycle of thirty]

Those whom I may not meet pester me now
Like dogs I lost seem leaping at my breast,
But lost, lost across space, found in a daydream
Only, or founded in the floundering west
Go under whispering messages that blow
Over the world and pester me with home.

And O more lonely than the only John
Who found his paradise on a minor island,
I sit among the hands and faces that mop and mow
Among the smothering mountains of my silence
Like lizards of reminiscence flashing recollection,
They glitter at me from rocks and peaks
And my heart begs that one of them speaks,
The apocalyptic faces that pester me now.

ii

And in these islands hung on the fringe of Asia,
The herbaceous border of the Siberian waste,
Where I move giddily in disgust or aphasia
Straddling the huts of paper and paste,
Here is this vacuum where goldfish float
Between transparent planes of mental negation
But are called thoughts, here on this glass
I see reflected the mechanism of fate
Evolving the instruments of destruction
For all that I've left, the Europe that was,
Whose historical frieze, in its seizure,
Shrieks with the voice of Sibelius, crying
Like a violin in the middle of the sea:
'I am dying!'

iii

By the now westward China, and, to the East,
 The spoiling, coiling, terrible, helluva sea,
 All my thinking is now circumvented
 And sleep that takes me home again is best.
 Not the September typhoon or earthquake indented
 Shore, the cholera epidemic or the war
 Punishes my nights with such violence
 Or crushes my days between such extremity:

So much as absence whispers in the evening
 The sentimental commitments I have broken,
 And the images I've known and the words I've spoken
 O crush me between them where they grieve
 Like clouds. So that all my thinking is
 Circumvented by memory and a kiss.

iv

The Hawaiian aerodromes, the Pekin Summer Palace,
 Cyclonic Kamchatka, the yellow archipelago,
 Laokoon China and the circles of snow,
 I look among them for the herbs of solace
 To soothe an absence, or to find a place
 Where among the amazing masks and the ginko,
 The seismics, the diseases, the natural disasters,
 I can clear a space for my own past.

But always the riverside willows tease
 My eyes to tears; the message criss-crossed sea
 Goes mocking backwards and forwards but not for me;
 And the huge Clippers, skimming the parallels,
 Their language of birds, taking the wrong course,
 Tells me nothing but what a silence tells.

Note. The China and California Clippers carry mail between America and the Orient.

v

Therefore not beautiful Jerusalem or any remove
 Of once exotic geography, not the small monument
 Of dogs and poets and homosexual love

Lying embalmed in the sea off the dangerous continent,
 Not to the tongues of the Mexican guitar, or
 In the moustachioed coxcombery of the Latin zone,
 Or in a white villa on the expensive blue shore
 Among the disgustingly rich, O no in none
 Can you or I lay down our head and rest:
 For although the bird and the beast have a nest,
 We have one only, and that one is so lonely
 That only the Chatterton boy or Antony man
 Is brave enough to lie alone in the grave.
 But you and I, O it is love we must have.

vi

And now there is nothing left to celebrate
 But the individual death in a ditch or a plane
 Like the cock o' the north in a hurricane.
 Out of the bogus glory and the synthetic hate,
 The welter of nations and the speeches, O step down
 You corpse in the gold and blue, out of a cloud,
 My dragon fly, step down into your own:
 The ditch and the dislocated wings and the cold
 Kiss of the not to be monumental stone.

This is the only dignity left, the single
 Death without purpose and without understanding
 Like birds boys drop with catapults. Not comprehending
 Denudes us of the personal aim and angle,
 And so we are perfect sacrifice to nothing.

vii

To any member of my generation

What is it you remember?—the summer mornings
 Down by the river at Richmond with a girl,
 And as you kissed, clumsy in bathing costumes,
 History guffawed in a rosebush. What a warning!—
 If only we had known, if only we had known.
 And when you looked in mirrors was this meaning
 Plain as the pain in the centre of a pearl?
 Horrible to-morrow in God-damning postures
 Making absurd the past we cannot disown.

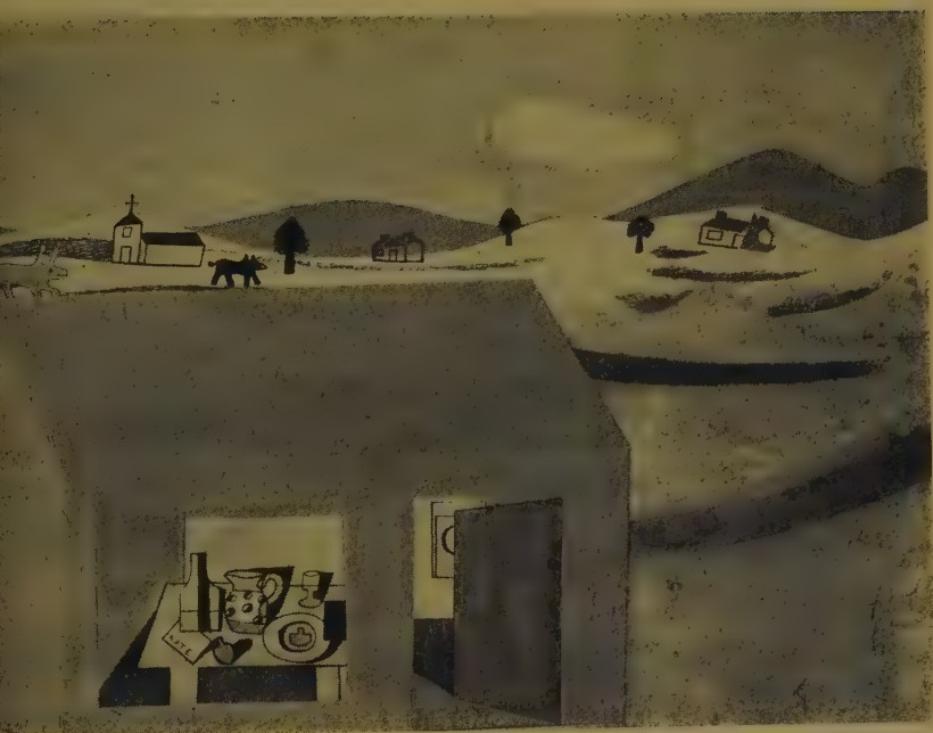
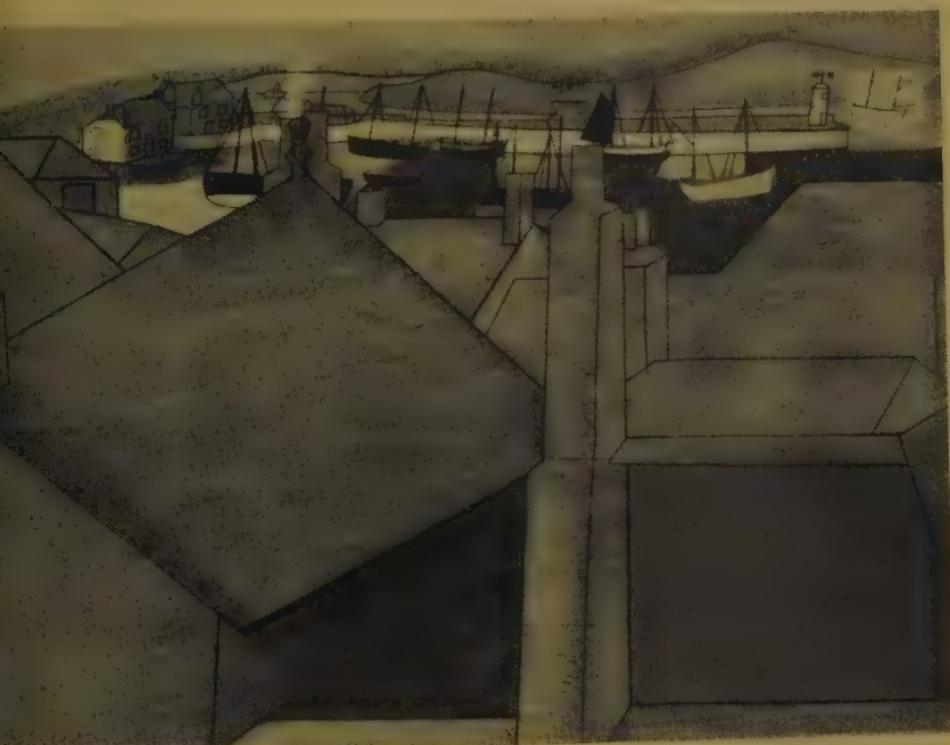


Illustration to Children's Book 'George & Rufus'.
Ben Nicholson 1938.



'St. Ives'. Ben Nicholson 1940

Whenever we kissed we cocked the future's rifles
And from our wild-oat words like dragons' teeth
Death underfoot now arises: when we were gay,
Dancing together in what we hoped was life
Who was it in our arms but the whores of death
Whom we have found in our beds to-day, to-day?

FRANCIS SCARFE

THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS

I

DYLAN THOMAS is one of the most promising of the poets under thirty, but he has suffered through catching the public ear a little too early, which resulted in unfounded criticism by both his supporters and detractors. He was promising in 1934 (*Eighteen Poems*. Parton Press) and promising in 1936 (*Twenty-five Poems*. Dent). To those who have followed his production since then he is still promising, and this premature estimate of him is being made to clarify the nature of that promise.

For many people his poems are puzzles, seeming to offer at first reading no more than a forbidding cliff, impenetrable to reason, from which there jut great crags of capricious imagery. Some people (notably Miss Sitwell) read him for his sound, but though the words peal fully and roundly, the rhythms are monotonous enough to make this pall. But many a good poet is monotonous. The only satisfactory approach seems to be to plumb these images and verbal din and see what lies beyond.

The poems, especially in the 1934 and 1936 volumes, seem to have three noticeable points of contact. Discussion of the metaphysicals, sitwellism and surrealism are irrelevant. The dominant points of contact seem to be James Joyce, the Bible, and Freud. The personal habits of language and mythology of Dylan Thomas can readily be identified through these three sources. The first is linguistic, the second mythological, the third psycho-pathological, the key to his interpretation of his world.

II

It is agreed that James Joyce's language in *Ulysses* is simple enough. It appears difficult only when sentences and parts of sentences do not appear logically related. *Ulysses* is the masterpiece of the unexpected: the element of surprise, so puffed by Poe and Baudelaire, and so unclassical, dominates every page. The words are not

dd, they are merely at times oddly related. Later, when Joyce involved a composite language, it appeared to some people (like myself) more satisfying and logical than the jargon of *Ulysses*, because this new language has a recognizable basis in philology. In *Ulysses* there are such elementary experiments as 'A screaming pittern's harsh high whistle shrieks. Groangrousegurgling Toft's umbersome whirligig turns slowly the room right roundabout the room.' This is simple, it reveals meaning, is emotionally apprehended. 'Steel shark stone onehanded Nelson, two trickies rauenzimmer plumstained from pram falling bawling.' Though the words are simple, this is not easy. It is not readily apprehended either emotionally or by analysis. It lives only in its context. Such writing reveals in miniature the linguistic habits of Dylan Thomas.

His basic device (which Joyce later systematized) is the invention of words. This device is fully in accord with Dylan Thomas's own statement, 'Poetry is the rhythmic, inevitably narrative, movement from an overclothed blindness to a naked vision', and his definition of his poetic activity as '... the physical and mental task of constructing a formally watertight compartment of words, preferably with a main moving column' (*New Verse*, October 1934). Dylan Thomas, in writing poetry, is not expressing so much as discovering his feelings. This is as it should be, for the reading and writing of poetry at any time are largely acts of discovery. The poet conventionally offers what he knows he has found, but Thomas offers the process of discovery itself. This unfinishedness is regarded by some as an insult to the reader, but in reality it is characteristic, honest, and one of the most attractive aspects of his work.

The invention of words, then, is inevitable in the expression of the half-perceived, incoherent sensations and ideas. And as his pen moves between a host of choices, seeking some short-cut to expression as the surrealists do by automatism, Dylan Thomas invents such terms as man-iron, bonerailed, seaspindle, seastruck, all-hollowed, pin-hilled, natron. The presence of puns in these composites (all-hollowed) indicates his pedantic dry humour. At other times, instead of fusing ideas together in this way, Thomas distorts their usual meanings, as in 'minstrel angle' (ministering angel?), 'triangle landscape' (here triangular + trinity, formed by the crosses of Christ and the robbers), 'ship-racked gospel', and the like. Real obscurity only starts when a false epithet is used, of

which Joyce was rarely guilty. These are sometimes immense and expressive, as in 'dead nuisance' or 'iron mile', but the trick annoys when it hides rather than reveals meaning, as in 'cold season', 'cadaverous gravel', 'metal neptune'. This emotional use of epithet resembles fake-surrealism. Real surrealism is practically reached in his fourth trick, 'man of leaves', 'tree of nettles', 'wood of weathers', 'sixth of wind', 'house of bread'. This is very charming at first, but it bores by repetition. The final trick is the inaccurate use of verbs, which abounds in these poems in such lines as:

Through the rampart of the sky
Shall the star-flanked seed be riddled.

(Poem 5)

Most of these verbal tricks are from time to time completely successful and justified, as in the ten 'religious' sonnets in the *Twenty-five Poems*, where 'gallow grave', 'mountain minute', even 'glove of prints' and 'linen spirit' are impressive and logical in their context. At his best, Thomas reminds us of the Old Testament, James Joyce and Hopkins all at once. It matters little whether he reads them: his language partakes of all three.

In his later poems (since 1936) Thomas has diluted these verbal surprises. That his poems still startle our complacency is a proof that his first appeal was not due to mere bogus verbalism. It is well that he is losing some of these habits, which lead to preciousness of the most pompous kind. Not that it is to be despised, for preciousness itself can reveal a wealth of unsuspected fact. A poetry is precious.

III

I do not agree with a critic who said that there were two types of poems in the 1936 volume, 'sense' and 'nonsense' poems. The poems scarcely differ in method, and are made sensible by the pervading presence of the Bible and sexual symbolism.

Genesis, the Garden of Eden, the Fall, Adam, original sin, the presence of Cain, Job, Jacob, Abraham, Lazarus, the legends of Christ and Mary, form the bulk of the reference-matter, and even the subject-matter of the *Twenty-five Poems*. The fervency of these references is due to the fact that the Bible appears as a cruel and crazy legend, as seen through childish memories of hot-gospelling.

and the diabolical grimace of the Welsh Bethel. The Biblical element is further confused by a primitive metaphysics, related in the last analysis to a sexual interpretation of the universe:

Dawn breaks behind the eyes;
 From poles of skull and toe the windy blood
 Slides like a sea;
 Nor fenced, nor staked, the gushers of the sky
 Spout to the rod
 Divining in a smile the oil of tears.

(‘Light breaks where no sun shines’)

The philosophy is simple: the universe is sexually dynamic; bird, beast and stone share the same (sexual) life with man (an advance on the pretty pantheism of Wordsworth), but, for ever conscious of a sense of sin, Thomas conveys this as something terrible:

The horizontal cross-bones of Abaddon,
 You by the cavern over the black stairs,
 Rung bone and blade, the verticals of Adam,
 And, manned by midnight, Jacob to the stars:
 Hairs of your head, then said the hollow agent,
 Are but the roots of nettles and of feathers
 Over these groundworks thrusting through a pavement,
 And hemlock-headed in the wood of weather.

(Poem 25: II)

Why horizontal and verticals (genitals would do)? The same arbitrary association links Abaddon, Jacob and Adam. Hollow agent (joke) is Death. Only ‘cross-bones’, ‘cavern’ and ‘hemlock’ produce horror. These lines form part of a sonnet relating growth from childhood to manhood. Death is present from beginning to end.

The *horreur de la vie et l'extase de la vie* of Baudelaire are evenly balanced in Dylan Thomas. His universe is dynamic, frighteningly active and alive:

And now the horns of England, in the sound of shape,
 Summon your snowy horsemen, and the four-stringed hill,
 Over the sea-gut loudening, sets a rock alive;

Hurdles and guns and railings, as the boulders heave,
 Crack like a spring in a vice, bone breaking April,
 Spill the lank folly's hunter and the hard-held hope . . .

(Poem 10)

But, in consequence, death itself appears not as a negation, but as an equally dynamic force, as old as Adam:

The wisemen tell me that the garden gods
 Twined good and evil on an eastern tree;
 And when the moon rose windily it was
 Black as the beast and paler than the cross.

(Poem 3)

Death, not life, is the measure of time:

A worm tells summer better than the clock,
 The slug's a living calendar of days.

(Poem 7)

So it is that the life-death problem in Dylan Thomas is as unresolved as the sex-sin problem. These dualisms are again related to a theological dualism, body-soul, as expressed in the first poem of the collection:

I, in my intricate image, stride on two levels,
 Forged in man's minerals, the brassy orator
 Laying my ghost in metal,
 The scales of this twin world tread on the double,
 My half ghost in armour hold hard in death's corridor,
 To my man-iron sidle.

(Poem 1)

This is more than lay philosophy, for it is implicit here that the triumph of the body is death of the spirit, since the 'man-iron' (flesh) and 'ghost in armour' (soul) are equally aggressive elements. It is only owing to this primitive interpretation that Thomas is able to confuse sexual and spiritual values in the ten 'religious' sonnets.

These so-called 'sonnets' (they are 14-line poems) cannot be considered separately, as together they form a unit (Poem 25). The technique is cumulative, impressionistic, though in one or

two sonnets the subject is directly presented. Subjects, rather, for though the theme is the life-death antagonism, it is inextricably bound up with Old and New Testament mythology and sexual symbolism. It is rash to reduce such works to a formula, but for me they represent a double pattern of Biblical and sexual imagery, the recognizable characters being Satan (identified with death and sin), sex (i.e. life, represented by Adam and even Gabriel), Mary the justification of sex through child-bearing and suffering, but none the less a worldly symbol), and Christ (victim and blood-offering rather than hero).

Sonnet II, quoted above, expresses the identification of sex with sin and nature through Biblical reference. The third sonnet is confused, and in it the Old Testament wait for the Messiah, the Paschal Lamb, the three-days' death of Christ and the Ram of the Zodiac are so related that only the author could give a satisfactory explanation, if there is one. Not that it matters, for even a few lines of that poem should show Dylan Thomas's capacity for 'montage', as he works together a sense of time, the foreshadowed conflict of life and death principles, against a scriptural and sexual background:

First there was the lamb on knocking knees
And three dead seasons in a climbing grave
That Adam's wether in the flock of horns,
Butt of the tree-tailed worm that mounted Eve,
Horned down with skullfoot and the skull of toes
On thunderous pavements in the garden time.

Such verse is not intellectually rich, but sensually and emotionally it is profound. The fourth sonnet is a passage of sexual mysticism, in which love and sex are identified as a prelude to the nativity (Sonnets V and VI). 'And from the windy West came two-blunned Gabriel' (V). The narrative begins moving with this first line, the gangster-disguise of Gabriel (however naive) giving the sense of shock and incredible difficulty suggested by the Annunciation. Again cabballistic tricks come to the aid of the poet, who conjures us a miracle with a pack of cards and a mumbo-jumbo of literary and Biblical allusion. Sonnet VI continues in the same vein, being a gruesome conception and nativity in one, contrived once more by a cabballistic formula:

He in a book of water tallow-eyed
 By lava's light split through the oyster vowels
 And burned sea-silence on a wick of words . . .

But this time the difficulties are not shirked, and all the horrors of birth (as suggested by Genesis and Milton perhaps) are conveyed in a brutally effective language:

And love plucked out the stinging siren's eye,
 Old cock from nowheres lopped the minstrel tongue .
 Till tallow I blew from the wax's tower
 The fats of midnight when the salt was singing;
 Adam, time's joker, on a witch of cardboard
 Spelt out the seven seas, an evil index,
 The bagpipe-breasted ladies in the deadweed
 Blew out the blood gauze through the wound of manwa

The attending presence of the siren and cock (both symbolizing lust and sacrifice), Adam (the sinner), and the 'ladies in the deadweed' (again sirens, Fates, Furies, acting as midwives) heighten symbolically the horror of Christ's difficult, and indeed *unnatural* birth. The next sonnet summarizes Christ's career: not the conventional tale so much as the bringing into focus of all Biblical legend, and a new identification of man with god and the universe. Its concentrated rhetoric—

Now stamp the Lord's prayer on a grain of rice,
 A Bible-leaved of all the written woods,
 Strip to this tree: a rocking alphabet,
 Genesis in the root, the scarecrow word,
 And one light's language in the book of trees;
 Doom on deniers at the wind-turned statement—

brings together the literal fanatic, doubting Thomas and the twentieth-century modernist, while before them lies a world of living fact in which spiritual and physical realities meet.

The eighth sonnet, the Crucifixion, is the best.

This was the crucifixion on the mountain,
 Time's nerve in vinegar, the gallows grave

As tarred with blood as the bright thorns I wept;
 The world's my wound, God's Mary in her grief,
 Bent like three trees and bird-papped through her shift,
 With pins for teardrops is the long wound's woman.
 This was the sky, Jack Christ, each minstrel angle
 Drove in the heaven-driven of the nails
 Till the three-coloured rainbow from my nipples
 From pole to pole leapt round the snail-waked world.
 I by the tree of thieves, all glory's sawbones
 Unsex the skeleton this mountain minute,
 And by this blowclock witness of the sun
 Suffer the heaven's children through my heartbeat.

(To establish a hasty glossary, it seems evident that Time's nerve = Christ, i.e. most sensitive point in history: gallows = shallow + gallows; line 3: I = Christ (if it means Dylan Thomas the poem loses); line 5, three trees = crosses; bird-papped = association of dove, also undeveloped, virginal: pins for teardrops — compare Picasso's imagery, the very tears wound: Jack Christ— Hopkinese, Christ is Everyman: minstrel angle = ministering angel, also literally minstrel angle, that is each corner of the singing sky: heaven-driven—the responsibility for the 'crime' rests with God, not man: three-coloured rainbow—a new covenant made by the Trinity (see Milton): snail-waked—snail symbol of destruction, sloth and lust: sawbones—doctor: mountain—gigantic, important: blowclock—literally so, or the lifeless Christ's body become a symbol.)

In a sense this poem seems to symbolize the birth of love through the death of sex. Mary suffers the true punishment of Eve—not merely the pangs of child-birth, but the death of her offspring. The full symbolism only appears towards the end of the poem, with the words 'Unsex the skeleton this mountain minute'. A similar instance of sexual frustration occurs in 'I in my intricate image', in the words

a cock on a dunghill
 Crying to Lazarus the morning is vanity.

The conclusion to be drawn from this fine crucifixion poem is disturbing. After presenting in all his poems a brilliant sexual

interpretation of life, Dylan Thomas has here presented a sexual interpretation of death. The secret of death, and its horror, is that it is sexless. (Note: this may seem a far-fetched interpretation of a straightforward poem. The answer is that all interpreting is dangerous, and never quite in focus. The poet is rarely entirely responsible for his implications, they rest with the reader.)

These poems owe their success to their density rather than to their outlook, though the outlook is original and stimulating. One or two of them are too exclusively montage, but as a whole they concentrate admirably in a final synthesis the tentative self-exploration of the rest of the volume.

In Dylan Thomas's later poems this Biblical background narrows (some would say broadens) considerably. The 'Poem in October' (*The Year's Poetry* 1935) is a variation on the theme 'In the beginning was the Word', for in it all living things and natural objects are defined in terms of letters, vowels, syllables, etc. This poem could well have appeared nauseatingly literary, were it not for the fact that the subject is sustained by a strong sense of universal analogy, the one-ness of life, and justified by the poet's presence in the poem. This is a good instance of Thomas's pseudo-cabbalistic mystery, an effect which is readily obtained with few properties, but for a full development of which Thomas has no more than the necessary background. Let us remember (as a warning to schoolgirls who regard Dylan Thomas as a magician) that Professor Saurat once affirmed that Rimbaud's *Les Voyelles* was based on the mysteries of the Cabbala. At seventeen, Rimbaud could easily obtain a smattering (about five lines) of knowledge of those mysteries from a Larousse dictionary. . . .

Towards 1937 Thomas broke slightly away from Biblical background, only to err consciously or unconsciously towards church-ritual. This may have been due to Eliot or George Barker. That it was not successful can be seen in the poem 'It is the sinner dust-tongued Bell Claps me to Churches' (*The Year's Poetry* 1937). Though there are some fine movements in the poem, in spite of the clarifying of the images the theme is less clear than in his earlier poems, and it leaves a sense of frustration. 'In Memory of Ann Jones' (*The Year's Poetry* 1938), which is perhaps his best poem since then, is fundamentally religious, and is Biblical rather than church-going. Even the poem 'There was a Saviour' (*Horizon*

May 1940) is only a new outlet for the Messianic legend, and the typical imagery is ritualistic.

It would be ridiculous to claim Thomas for any church. It is sufficient to note to what entirely different uses T. S. Eliot and Dylan Thomas have put the Bible for purposes of poetry. Thomas is much nearer Blake, one might even say nearer Donne, but also perilously near Rimbaud's *Les Premières Communiōns*.

IV

Poetry must drag further into the clear nakedness of light more even of the hidden causes than Freud could realize.'—(Dylan Thomas, *New Verse*, October 1934).

So wrote Dylan Thomas in his admission that he had been influenced by Freud. The influence is first of all general, understandable in a poet whose chief preoccupation is to explore childhood and adolescence. Only a reader of Freud can receive the full impact, which is enormous, of Dylan Thomas's predominantly sexual imagery. The influence of Freud would seem to go even further (see para II) in view of the poet's acknowledgment that his activity as a poet is one of self-discovery rather than self-expression or even self-analysis. In their finished state the poems suggest that self-analysis could be undertaken by such a poet only by analysing what he had written. That is to say, they are not the product of analysis, but the very raw material for it. They are in the fullest sense documents: they are not intellectual or cerebral, but so spontaneous that the poet himself might well be amazed and bewildered in face of them.

The sexual symbolism in the poems seems to work largely as an assertion of sexuality, of the sexual basis of all thought and action. Secondly, the poems also contain some implied defences of this sexuality, justifications offered by the poet to society and to his own conscience. A little probing reveals not a liberated body but an obsessed mind (as in D. H. Lawrence):

And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

('The force that through the green fuse')

Dylan Thomas's imagery is predominantly masculine, to the point of onanism and homosexuality. And although the male

sexual images are bold, harsh and triumphant, there is a sense impending tragedy and frustration.

I see that from these boys shall men of nothing
Stature by seedy shifting
Or lame the air with leaping of its heats.

I am the man your father was.
We are the sons of flint and pitch.
Oh see the poles are kissing as they cross.

(‘Two’, *New Verse*, June 1933)

The male is constantly expressed, naturally, in heroic images, such as the tower, turret, tree, monster, crocodile, knight in armour, ghost, sailor, Jacob’s ladder, sky-scraper. But side-by-side with these are other equally male sex-images which carry also the idea of death and disgrace, such as the snake, the slug, the snail and the maggot:

In old man’s shank one-marrowed with my bone,
And all the herrings smelling in the sea,
I sit and watch the worm beneath my nail
Wearing the quick away.

(*New Verse*, August 1934)

It seems evident that Thomas’s allegiance to Freud has now resulted, in his poems, in the cleansing of sexuality from the Old Testament sense of sin. Even the ‘Paradise Regained’ poem (as one might call the last of the sonnet-sequence) ends on a combined note of creation and destruction:

Green as beginning, let the garden diving
Soar, with its two bark towers, to that Day
When the worm builds with the gold straws of venom
My nest of mercies in the rude, red tree.

For the vision of the worm creating is only gained after the sexual immolation of the male (Christ):

I by the tree of thieves, all glory’s sawbones
Unsex the skeleton this mountain minute,

And by this blowcock witness of the sun
Suffer the heaven's children through my heartbeat.

The words 'unsex the skeleton' are a good indication of Thomas's problem, the reconciling of the creative and destructive elements of sex. In view of the prevailing sense of sin, this suspicion that sex is not an end in itself, and that the ultimate objective is irredeemably obscure, it must be concluded that the poet's interpretation of sex is still as close to the Old Testament as to the psychology of Freud. The Bible provides the mythology by which the problem can be raised to a high and universal plane, while Freud gives the impetus to what is perhaps the most overwhelming and poignant sexual imagery in modern poetry.

V

'The more subjective a poem, the clearer the narrative line.'—(Dylan Thomas, *New Verse*, October 1934). This is eminently satisfying if considered only in reference to Dylan Thomas himself. His poems are admittedly subjective, and their structure is remarkably simple. Not only is the 'main moving column' of words present; there is in consequence a strong core of subject round which the imagery is grouped. For this reason, although many people are dismayed by the accumulation of imagery and pseudo-imagery in the poems (for he is a spendthrift poet), the poems are far from being chaotic. Thomas's fundamental simplicity is shown in two of his finest poems, 'The hand that signed the paper felled a city' and 'The force that through the green fuse drives the flower'. These two poems reveal a classical ability to develop fully a simple subject. They alone would prove him a considerable poet. (After painting his complex portrait of Gertrude Stein Picasso needed all his genius to draw like a child.)

In many poems the overlaying of images seems to go too far. That this is not a sign of weakness, however, and that Thomas still has (or had until recently) this basis of simplicity, is shown in what appears to me his best poem, 'In Memory of Ann Jones' (1938). The poem is planned in a manner worthy of Valéry himself, and wealth of imagery subdued to the subject. There are four phases, the burial, the feast, the character and the homage. Tied images unite these phases, all of them relating to death, her home, her character. The poem is, in the poet's words, 'a monstrous thing

blindly magnified out of praise'. Here Thomas achieves a concentration which is to be found in glimpses in his earlier poems.

I know her scrubbed and sour humble hands
 Lie with religion in their cramp, her threadbare
 Whisper in a damp word, her wits drilled hollow,
 Her fist of a face died clenched in a round pain;
 And sculptured Ann is seventy years of stone. . . .

The typical furniture of her room, which appears early in the poem ('In a room with a stuffed fox and a stale fern') serves as dominant tied image, reappearing brilliantly at the end to drive home the idea that her love might even bring the dead to life:

. . . until
 The stuffed lung of the fox twitch and cry Love
 And the strutting fern lay seeds on the black sill.

Dylan Thomas's poems are somewhat coarse-grained because of the profusion of imagery, most of it in overtones, grouped round the centre. But in the best poems, as in 'In Memory of An Jones', the magnifying habit scores heavily. In more recent poems there is less overlaying, and in 'There was a Saviour' there is evidence of a more refining process of selection.

VI

Technically, Dylan Thomas has achieved nothing new. His alliterative and inventive tricks are as old as poetry. His personal rhythms are not unusual when compared with those of Hopkins. He writes with equal ease in fixed and loose forms. His outstanding merit, when compared with the other young poets, is his rich vocabulary, his sensual appreciation of words, his intense persuasive idiom which reveals him as one who is reaching towards a language that is most living in our language. In that respect he is an anachronism, for he has not abandoned the wealth of the past for the somewhat thin idiom of Hollywood and the Middlesex suburbs as many poets are doing.

Humanly, Thomas is lacking in genuine humour, though he is humorous enough in everyday life. He displays in his writing surely enough, the traditional Welsh easy flow of speech. But

most of his jokes are either purely verbal, or sad and a little sinister. The characteristic tone of his poems is grave and depressing. There is sorrow in his wit, which is grim. This grimness is to be found also in his stories, such as 'The Burning Baby' and 'The School of Witches', where it reaches cruelty.

Dylan Thomas is fundamentally a poet of the feelings, and is not a visual poet. He does not see clearly and consequently is a cuckoo in the nest of the *New Verse* observation poets. His main object is to feel clearly, which he has not yet achieved:

I have been told to reason by the heart,
But heart, like head, leads helplessly.

(Poem 19)

He seeks the world in himself, and consequently his work is entirely autobiographical.

His future depends on an enlarging of his simple vision of the sexual basis of life, and it is to be hoped that he will not abandon this essential subject. That problem itself, and his evident conflict as to its solution, should provide him an inexhaustible and vital theme. He is potentially the most modern of the young poets now writing, because of his assimilation of Joyce, Freud and the Bible, and because so far he has rejected the influence of the generation immediately preceding his own. He, like no young poet save perhaps George Barker and Ruthven Todd, is his own poet. Thomas is the most old-fashioned of his generation in his apparent separation of his poetry from his politics. This might yet prove valuable. Technically he has little to do save to give his verbal inventions a better grounding in reality and in philology, to concentrate even more on that 'main moving column', and to concede less to that delight in a grimace by which every poet is tempted.

August 1940

FRED URQUHART

MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE

WHEN Mrs. Watt opened the gate she saw a fair-haired young man watching her out of the window. Waddling up the path she was aware of him watching her every step. The road from the bus-stop had been uphill, and the sweat was trickling down her forehead and fat blowsy cheeks. She wiped her face, and as she drew her fingers across her brow, she saw that the young man was still standing at the window, gazing at her. As if he were staring at something in the zoo, she thought. She went to the back-door, and as she was raising her hand to knock, the young man opened the door suddenly. She stood with her upraised hand in the air, feeling foolish.

‘You’ll be the new charwoman?’ he said.

She nodded and shuffled past him.

‘My mother’s not up yet,’ he said. ‘But you can just begin.’

She put her black oilskin bag on the chair in the scullery and as she unpinned her hat she took stock of him. He was a very pale young man with hollow cheeks pitted with huge pores. He had pale blue, watery eyes that stared persistently at her from between his almost white lashes. She felt vaguely uncomfortable under his stare as she took her apron out of her bag and tied it around her fat stomach.

‘What do you want me to do first?’ she said.

‘You can do the fires,’ he said.

He showed her the box with blacklead and brushes. ‘You know how to clean a fire, don’t you?’ he said. ‘You rake out the ashes and you take away the fender and——’

Mrs. Watt laughed. ‘Bless me, laddie!’ she said. ‘I cleaned fireplaces long before ye were born.’

He stood and watched her as she set to work. All the time she was blackleading she was conscious of his watchful pale eyes and she began to be annoyed at his continued scrutiny. He had to step aside when she took out the ashes to the bin, and she said ‘Ye’re just like my first joker, he was aye gettin’ in the way.

ften used to say to him, "G'wa' oot o' ma road for ony favour
nd let me get on wi' ma work."

But the young man did not take the hint. He hovered about
the room, moving restlessly from one chair to another. He kept up
persistent breathing through his half-open mouth. It was neither
whistle nor a tune and it began to get on Mrs. Watt's nerves.

'What'll I do next?' she said.

'The dishes.'

He went before her into the scullery and pointed to a pile
of dirty dishes on the board by the sink. 'You know how to
do them, don't you?' he said. 'You drip them on this tray.'

Mrs. Watt laughed, but she did not say anything. The laddie's
surely sort of simple, she said to herself. But she knitted her
eyebrows irritably when he lounged against the boiler and watched
her. He was behind her, but all the time she was aware of the
thin, tuneless whistling. She rattled the dishes noisily, trying to
vent her irritation on them. She was relieved when Mrs. Laurie
came in. She was a tired-looking little woman with a fretful
face and pale eyes like her son.

'Good morning, Mrs. Watt,' she said. 'Has Eric been telling
you what to do?'

'Ay,' Mrs. Watt said.

'I don't know what I'd do without him,' Mrs. Laurie said.
He's such a comfort to me. Far better than many a daughter
would have been. He's terribly handy about the house.'

'I can see that,' Mrs. Watt said.

Mrs. Laurie leaned against the sink and began to lament about
her troubles. Not that Mrs. Watt could see that she had any
house to complain. Her husband, who had been a well-to-do
market gardener, had died several years before, and had left
her in very comfortable circumstances.

'Eric was our only child,' she said. 'He's all that I've got
left now. Thank goodness, he's never needed to go out and
work. I don't know what I'd have done if he'd had to go out every
day to business. For all that he would have made, anyway. It
wouldn't have been worth it. And I feel that I need somebody
to keep me company. It's nice, I always think, to have a man
about the house.'

'Well, it depends on the man,' Mrs. Watt said. 'I've had three,
and none o' them were the kind o' men that ye like to see sittin'

continually by the fireside. No' that that kept them frae doin' that, of course. None o' them were the kind that would brea' their necks bein' in the front o' ony queue lookin' for work. My first joker especially. Bless me, but he was oftener at hair than he was in a job.'

She sighed as she polished the chairs in the living-room. 'But ye shouldnie speak ill o' the dead. And he's been dead a long time, puir man. Gallopin' consumption he had.'

'I sometimes think that Eric's got consumption,' Mrs. Laurie said. 'He's been complaining of pains in his chest and head.'

While his mother and Mrs. Watt were speaking, Eric lounged about. He never opened his mouth, but Mrs. Watt was acute aware of his presence. He seemed to be getting continually her road. She wished that he would go into another room or go outside, but he remained beside them. He did not appear to be listening to their conversation, but Mrs. Watt felt that nothing escaped him. She felt, too, that Mrs. Laurie would say much more if he were not there. All the time she watched her son, twisting her hands nervously.

Suddenly Eric spoke.

He said: 'Is there any lemonade in the house?'

'No, dear,' his mother said. 'I don't think so, dear.'

Eric said nothing. He stared in front of him, his lips drawn-in a silent whistle.

'Did you want some lemonade, dear?' Mrs. Laurie said anxiously. 'Take some money and go and get some, dear.'

Eric lifted her bag from the sideboard and took out a two shilling piece. He tossed it in the air and put it in his pocket. Mrs. Watt felt a sense of relief as he lounged out.

As soon as he had gone, Mrs. Laurie licked her lips nervously and said: 'I really don't know what to do about Eric. He's not feeling well at all.'

'Is it thae pains ye were tellin' me aboot?' said Mrs. Watt.

'Yes, I took him to a specialist and he examined him, but he didn't seem able to find anything wrong with him. I had to pay three guineas for the examination, and do you know what he said? You'll never guess, Mrs. Watt.'

'I dinnae ken,' Mrs. Watt said. 'I never was ony guid guessin'.'

'He said——' Mrs. Laurie gulped. 'He said: "There's damn all wrong with him. You should get him a job."'

Mrs. Watt tittered, but when she saw the look on Mrs. Lauric's face, she changed her titter into a cough and began to fill a pail at the sink.

'I'm terribly worried about him,' Mrs. Lauric said. 'I keep wondering whether I've done the right thing by him. Maybe I shouldn't have kept him at home like this. Maybe I've spoiled him. I don't know. But I felt that I needed company. After his father died, I simply had to have a man about the house.'

'If ye'd been married to ma first joker you wouldnic think that,' Mrs. Watt said, putting her pail on the scullery floor and dropping down beside it. 'He was a lad —' wringing out her cloth and slapping it on the linoleum—"and a half! Never did an honest day's work in his life. He was aye sittin' in ma road. A fair scunner!'

Mrs. Laurie's fingers plucked nervously at the cords of her dressing-gown. 'I wish I knew what to do about Eric,' she said. 'He'll have to register for the army next month.'

'Ach, dinnie worry aboot that,' Mrs. Watt said. 'He doesnie look strong. They'll never take him.'

'It's not that I was thinking about,' Mrs. Lauric said. 'I was wondering what I'd do if they didn't take him.'

The front door banged, and Eric came in with three bottles of lemonade. He stared at his mother and Mrs. Watt, but there was no flicker of expression on his face. Mrs. Laurie stopped talking as soon as the door banged; she went away to her bedroom. Eric switched on the wireless and sat down beside it. He took three packets of chocolate from his pocket. Mrs. Watt eyed them, thinking to herself how she would thank him. But Eric began to eat the chocolate himself, never saying a word. Between bites he whistled tunelessly. After a while he opened one of the bottles and drank some of the lemonade. He nodded his head in time with the music from a jazz orchestra; his pale eyes staring at the window.

Mrs. Watt did some small jobs in the scullery. When she returned to the living-room she saw that Eric had opened another bottle and drunk some of the lemonade although he had drunk only a little out of the first bottle. She gave her head a puzzled shake and went to clean the bathroom.

She was wiping out the bath when Mrs. Laurie came in to speak to her. 'How many days a week do you think you'll be able to come, Mrs. Watt?' she said in a low voice.

'How many days do you want me?' Mrs. Watt said.

'Well, I'd like you every day, but Eric says it's nonsense.' Mrs. Laurie swallowed with embarrassment. 'He says we don't really need a charwoman, and that he's quite capable of doing all the work himself. But, of course, I can't have him doing that.' She looked uneasily behind her in the direction of the living room. 'Do you think you'd be able to come three days a week?'

'In the forenoons?' Mrs. Watt said. 'I'd like away at twelve o'clock if possible.'

'That'll be all right,' Mrs. Laurie said. She lowered her voice again: 'Don't say anything to Eric about how often you're going to come. He—er—well, he's never got on very well with any of the women we've had. But, of course, you're different,' she added quickly. 'He seems to be getting on all right with you.'

'Ay,' Mrs. Watt said.

'Just don't say anything to him,' Mrs. Laurie said. 'Nothing that'll make him angry. He's got an awful quick temper.'

'All right,' Mrs. Watt said.

She finished cleaning the bathroom, then she began to peel potatoes for the dinner. When she finished them, she went to ask Mrs. Laurie what else she would do. The bathroom door was half open, and Eric was busy cleaning the taps that Mrs. Watt had done already. He was whistling tunelessly, his eyes staring through the door at Mrs. Watt, staring straight through her.

'Never heed him,' Mrs. Laurie whispered. 'He's so used to cleaning everything himself that he thinks nobody else can do it. He won't even let me do it. Never mind him. It gives him something to do. We'll just have to humour him until he goes to the army.'

Mrs. Watt was bewildered, but she said nothing; she kept looking anxiously at the clock. She wanted to get into the Cross Keys as soon as it opened; she needed a drink more badly to-day than she ever needed one. That laddie was just a bit more than she could bear. No wonder his mother looked as though she was being driven potty.

'Do you see that?' Mrs. Laurie cried.

Each of the bottles was open, and some lemonade had been taken out of each. The corks were lying on top of the wireless. Mrs. Laurie shook her head apologetically at Mrs. Watt and corked them. 'Eric's so careless,' she said. 'I don't know how he'll do in the army. I wonder how he'll get on?'

'Oh, he'll get on all right,' Mrs. Watt said.

But she wondered whether he would. She had an idea that the army would not deal with Eric as kindly and as softly as his mother had done. She did not know which of them she felt most sorry for.

Mrs. Laurie came to the door with her and whispered: 'Now, you'll be sure to come back to-morrow?'

'Sure,' Mrs. Watt said.

'That's a promise?' Mrs. Laurie said.

There was something so frightened and pathetic in her tone that Mrs. Watt could not say what she would have liked to say.

'Ay, that's a promise,' she said.

But as she went down the path she wondered whether it was a promise she could keep. And when she turned at the gate and saw Eric staring at her out of the living-room window, she felt panic-stricken. She forced herself to smile, but there was no responding smile from him. He continued to stare straight in front of him. Just like a cat, Mrs. Watt thought, hurrying to reach the Cross Keys. Just like a cat waiting to pounce . . . Or was it like a cat that had already pounced and was licking its lips after eating its prey?

EDWIN MUIR

THE NOVEL AND THE MODERN WORLD¹

IN his very able book, *The Novel and the Modern World*, Mr. David Daiches gives an excellently reasoned statement of what he calls the political view of literature. From that standpoint he criticises a number of modern novelists, Galsworthy, Conrad, Katherine Mansfield, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Aldous Huxley. He does not mention D. H. Lawrence. The criticism is written from a consistent standpoint, the political standpoint, and is both sensitive and closely reasoned. The four essays on Joyce (though they hardly refer to the Catholic elements in his work) are extraordinarily penetrating, for in them Mr. Daiches puts into practice his counsel to work from the wider context inward and from the work outward—the wider context being society. Yet he is better at working outward than inward, and the working inward determines to a great extent what he finds in the work itself; it blinds him, for instance, to the strong Catholic element in Mr. Joyce's work. To him Joyce has always striven to achieve the perfect work of art—'the work which says all things at once so that the life he describes is all life, and the words in which he expresses himself convey no point of view because they convey all points of view'. There is some truth in this, but none which can explain why Joyce should write at all; for no one can write without having some point of view, without seeing life in some terms. The terms in which Joyce sees life are difficult to define because of his simultaneous revolt against and attachment to the Catholic Church; consequently his attempt to describe all life is really an attempt to portray all Joyce, and his work is genuine, minute, Catholic self-inquisition conducted in an anti-Catholic or burlesque-Catholic spirit. But the Catholic impuls

¹ *The Novel and the Modern World*. By David Daiches. (Cambridge University Press.)

in Joyce does not matter to Mr. Daiches, because the wider context from which he works inward does not include Catholicism except as a factor to be interpreted politically.

His criticism is nevertheless thorough as far as it goes. His point of view, on the other hand, and the kind of statement by which he supports it, become more unconvincing the more clearly they are formulated. As that point of view is fairly widely held, it should be questioned. Mr. Daiches 'works inward' from such assumptions as this:

'Unfortunate as we are in many respects in living in the present world rather than at some time in the past, we are at least fortunate in this: that we are living at a time when the state of civilization is patent to all. No intelligent observer who has not allowed wishful thinking to master his intellectual processes can deny that we are living in the midst of the disintegration of a civilization, or, to put it in a less terrifying manner (though it is terrifying), in a transitional stage between two civilizations. Rarely, if ever, has the nature of the contemporary situation been so clear to observers. . . . We can look back on the recent past, knowing what it has been leading to, and analyse it with the familiarity of a contemporary, yet with the knowledge which hitherto has been reserved for the future historian. While as a rule the contemporary cannot see the wood for the trees and the historian cannot see the trees for the wood, here is a situation which seems to offer a chance of seeing clearly both the individual trees and the wood as a whole.'

A great number of intelligent writers would agree without qualification with most of the things which Mr. Daiches says here, and would regard them as truisms. I cannot feel sure of any of them, except the fairly clear evidence that a disintegration is going on. Whether that is a disintegration of civilization or of something within civilization I do not know. Whether in the first case it will lead to another civilization or to something which cannot be properly called a civilization at all (Fascism, for example), and whether in the second case civilization will manage to cure the disease within it, no one can possibly know. Mr. Daiches does not say what he means by civilization; he may mean much the same as politicians mean when they say that this or that will spell the ruin of civilization; but I do not think so. As for the nature of the contemporary situation being unusually clear to observers, we

may certainly think that it is clear, or feel convinced that it is clear; but there is evidence that it is not clear, since it is seen in one set of terms by some intelligent men and in another set by others. Mr. Daiches says that we can see both the wood and the trees; but the trees which Mr. T. S. Eliot sees are not Mr. Daiches' trees. Mr. Daiches is at liberty to say that Mr. Eliot is wrong, but not that his opinions do not exist. Again, whether the future will be fought for between the Fascists and the Communists is more doubtful since Nazi Germany made an alliance with Communist Russia against the democratic plutocracies; and in the months since Mr. Daiches wrote his book it has become equally possible to regard the conflict as a conflict between Democracy (what there is of it) and Totalitarianism (all there is of it) between Communism and Fascism; or even a conflict between Christian civilization and a civilization founded upon a purely secular creed. The contemporary situation, then, is by no means clear; yet the wider context from which Mr. Daiches works inwardly assumes that it is perfectly clear. This assumption is founded in the last resort on some such hypothesis as dialectical materialism which simplifies everything on a vast scale. If Calvinism in the Jacobean age had tried to assess Shakespeare, Donne, and Webster in terms of its dynamic theology, insisting that they could reflect their age only by associating themselves with the rising middle class, the new liberating force in society whose triumph was inevitable, we should have had a similar situation to what Mr. Daiches imagines the present one to be. In reality, the contemporary situation will not become clear until after the event: we do not know what shape it will have to the future historian; therefore we cannot judge contemporary literature by the means of it. Ordinary legitimate scepticism should be enough to tell us this. The common assumption that the nature of the contemporary situation is quite clear is a complicated example of the wishful thinking which Mr. Daiches blames.

To see the contemporary situation as clearly as Mr. Daiches sees it we must simplify a great number of things, perhaps, indeed everything except the final explanation of everything, to him, the political and economic background. This leads Mr. Daiches to ignore Joyce's Catholicism; it also leads him to 'interpret' Eliot and Huxley's religious beliefs. As this interpretation is typical of a great deal of modern criticism I had better quote it.

'It is interesting to compare T. S. Eliot's wasteland with the wasteland that Huxley paints in his early novels. They have much in common, though Eliot's is the wasteland of the thwarted classicist and Huxley's that of the thwarted romantic. Eliot emphasizes lack of pattern and purpose while Huxley stresses lack of worth-whileness for the individuals involved. And ultimately (again, if he does not go crazy first) your thwarted classicist will find refuge in some fairly rigid and institutionalized scheme of things to compensate him for his wounded sense of order. He joins the Roman Catholic Church or, like Eliot, the Anglican Church, which is almost the same thing. Huxley becomes a mystical pacifist with inclinations towards a personal interpretation of Buddhism, whereas Eliot lands up by becoming an orthodox member of a highly ritualistic and hierarchic religion. They represent two complementary types. Both, it may be added, avoid the issue, which is not personal compensation but the alteration of the environment which has produced the necessity for that compensation—the evolution and stabilization of a standard in which society can believe and with reference to which its activities can be given purpose and meaning and value.'

The difficulty in dealing with criticism of this kind is that it entirely ignores the nature of the things it is treating. It assumes that Mr. Eliot's religion is not real religion, and ultimately, perhaps, that religion is itself unreal—the opium of the masses which has now become the opium of the literary classes. It implies that if Mr. Eliot set out to alter his environment, and heartily identified himself with the proletariat, he would have no problems at all. To believe such things is ultimately to believe that we have no personal relations and no personal difficulties in living, but merely the public duty to change our environment, a duty which will bring us allies and enemies but nothing else. Mr. Daiches thinks that Mr. Eliot's religion is merely an avoidance of the issue and a compensation for his real duty; yet how he can believe that after reading *The Waste Land*, *Ash Wednesday*, and *The Family Reunion* is past imagining, unless he has read them without believing that they deal with anything that is real. Anyone who enters imaginatively into the experience which Mr. Eliot presents in *The Family Reunion* will merely be surprised at hearing his religion called a compensation. Anyone who cannot enter into it is not in a position to understand it; all that he can do,

therefore, is to interpret it in his own terms, which are foreign to the terms of the experience itself. Words like 'compensation' are two-edged; Mr. Daiches' interpretation of Eliot's experience may be a compensation for not understanding it. The first condition of any genuine criticism of Mr. Eliot's religion is that it should be understood; the critic may then decide that it contains truth or contains nothing but error; but he is not entitled to transform it into something else and then assess it as something else. I do not know whether Mr. Daiches would deny that there have been men who have had experience of religion in the past and that there may be men who can have experience of religion now; the interpretative method of criticism, which deprives everything of its individuality, changing it into something with no individuality, can become so fantastic that one does not know what to expect. But at any rate he seems to be quite sure that in our own time, when 'rarely if ever has the nature of the contemporary situation been so clear to observers', Mr. Eliot's religion can be only a compensation.

In this review I am concerned with questioning such assumptions, for they need to be questioned and they are hardly ever questioned. There is, no doubt, some truth in them, but even when used by such an intelligent critic as Mr. Daiches, there is evidently much error as well. Most of the error, it seems to me, rises from the fact that the theory he works upon is too general to be applied to individual works of imagination without robbing them of their individuality. In the last chapter there is an admirable statement of his theory:

'A work may be many different things at the same time, but it is important to know which is the essential thing, what it is that determines the pattern and the scale of emphasis, what is the real work, and what are the by-products of it. The purely formal critic always tends to think that he knows what the work in question is simply because it is in print before him. But he is much mistaken. The printed text may stand for any number of different works, as the history of criticism abundantly shows. What the real work is and what gives the principle of organization to the whole can be certainly determined only by investigating the relation of the printed words to the civilization that produced them.'

One might agree with this completely if one could be sure what Mr. Daiches means by the 'real' work, and if one were confident that the relation of the work to the civilization which produced it could be ascertained with any precision. The work itself, as it lies in print before us, is an exact thing; the civilization from which it sprang we cannot see with nearly the same clarity. What actually happens when we read a novel? We recognize first, if it is a good one, that the author is describing real people and real experience. How do we recognize it? By drawing on our conscious or guessed-at knowledge of life, not primarily on our knowledge of civilization. The first impact of reality comes here, and it comes immediately. The novel may describe life in the eighteenth century or life to-day; the fact that the novelist is writing of a different period does not prevent us from seeing that he is dealing with real people and real experience. This is a fact at which no one would think of wondering, and it requires no historical explanation. But the work which moves us in this way, Mr. Daiches says, is not the real work; to discover that we must establish the relation of the book we have read to the civilization from which it sprang. It is true that we shall not understand the book properly unless we do that, and unless we establish its position in the general course of literature. This can never be done completely, but the more we know about the historical genesis and position of a book the better we shall understand it. This is obvious. Where I disagree with Mr. Daiches is where he says that the 'real' work is discovered by investigating the relation of a book to the civilization that produced it; for he seems to imply that our first actual experience of it—whatever it is—*Tristram Shandy* or *Wuthering Heights* or *The Brothers Karamazov* or *The Magic Mountain* or *Ulysses*—is in some way less real than our understanding of its relation to the civilization that produced it. He implies this because he regards our knowledge of that relation not only as a help in understanding the novel in question, but as a first interpretative principle which, by explaining both the novel and our response to it in a new way, turns them into something else. The 'real' work is, therefore, not the one which originally convinced us because it was true to experience; nor was our conviction 'real'; both are as unreal as Mr. Eliot's religion. Mr. Daiches' insistence on this is merely another form of his insistence that the political interpretation is, not merely one among several interpretations,

but the final and only real interpretation. What we gain by the interpretation is clearness—‘rarely has the nature of the contemporary situation been so clear’. What we lose by it is the conviction that in a work of imagination a mind can speak to a mind immediately.

A short article on such a controversial subject must necessarily simplify things which are not simple. But I am merely questioning Mr. Daiches’ standpoint, and in their formulation questions must be simple. I have one more question before I finish. The theory which Mr. Daiches tries to work out in this book is, in his own words, ‘that the most serious and important section of modern fiction represents an attempted adjustment between literature and a certain state of transition in civilization and culture generally; and that this adjustment explains most of the differentiating features of the twentieth-century novel as well as providing an impressive example of the kind of relation that exists and always has existed between any particular art and the general state of civilization.’ He also considers that the adjustment to the transition explains the many experiments in form and language which mark the period. That period produced in this country *Ulysses*, *Tar*, *Sons and Lovers*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Nightwood*, and on the Continent the works of Proust, Thomas Mann and Franz Kafka. The serious writers of the present century have certainly been troubled by the problems of a period of transition; but it is clear that they have also been troubled by the desire to convey a new sense of experience in a worn language which was not fitted for it; and that is the first thing, it seems to me, to be said about them, and a sufficient explanation of their experiments. To say this, of course, is not to get past Mr. Daiches, for he can reply that that new sense of experience, too, can be explained by the writer’s adjustment to a state of transition. But it cannot be imaginatively understood on that supposition; it loses its reality and takes on a different reality in which all that was individual in it is generalized. Adjustment is not an adequate term for the experience described by Proust in *Le Temps Retrouvé*, which drove him to devote the rest of his life to the resuscitation within him of the *Eternal Man*. It cannot explain any individual effort, but only behaviour in general. If we could see our time with the eyes of a future historian, we should realize that everyone in it—not only the writer but the capitalist, the Communist, the grocer, the criminal, the scientist, the banker,

—is ‘adjusted’ to it in the most exact way. They have no choice. But that does not tell us much about them. The real defect of Mr. Daiches’ interpretation of contemporary literature is not that it is untrue (there is a good deal of truth in it), but that it is quite inadequate.

ARTURO BAREA

THE SCISSORS

I’LL tell you because you’re my chum, but you mustn’t tell anybody else. Listen; on my Saint’s Day I got a sewing-box. It’s a very pretty sewing-box. Mummy doesn’t let me take it to school, because she says that the girls will ruin it. It’s a box of lacquered wood, with painted flowers on the top and a mirror inside where you can see your whole face. It’s got a key. Look, here it is. I always wear it round my neck on a ribbon. Inside the box there are lots of little boxes of very thin wood, each for different things. In one is the embroidery silk in all colours, white, blue, red, green, and yellow, but no black. Black means mourning, and of course a little girl like me doesn’t need mourning. In another box are wools to mend my doll’s socks. The wool is wound on cardboard stars, the thread runs between the points of the star and so it becomes a star itself. But that’s not the best thing about it.

There are six tiny little spools with cotton, in colours and black too, because black cotton doesn’t mean mourning. These spools are like real ones, with a hole in the middle to put them on a sewing-machine. I haven’t got a sewing-machine, but my mother has promised to buy me one if I’m good, one of those small machines for little girls with a handle like a barrel-organ.

Then there are some velvet cushions with needles. The little embroidering needles have a golden eyelet, but the big ones haven’t. And there is a little book with letters and pretty drawings for embroidering. But I am still too little to do that.

In the middle of the box is the best of all: two golden thimbles, a bone thing to make holes with, and the scissors. The scissors are

really a stork with wings, and the scissors blades are the bill. When you open them, the stork opens his bill and eats up the cloth. And at the same time he opens his wings. It's tremendous fun to cut a thread with the very tips of the scissors, because then the stork pinches. But I'll tell you about that later. You see, he's a stork who can pinch. The wings and the rings for the fingers are golden and the bill is silver. Of course, the whole thing is of steel, but they have put gold on the wings and silver on the bill. They haven't made it of real gold and silver because then it wouldn't cut well and wouldn't be real scissors, you know.

When I got it, I asked Mummy for rags and began to cut. Then Father gave me heaps of magazines and I cut out all the faces in them. There was a very ugly man with a big beard and a bowler hat. I clipped his beard with the points of the scissors. There was only his head left and it looked as if it had been chopped off. Then I cut the bowler hat away from his forehead, and now when I want to I make him take off his hat, and when I want to I put it on again.

When Father saw me being quiet and snipping papers and rags he brought me some new things one day, a castle, a ship and an aeroplane to make from what you've cut out. But because Father is so silly he said I couldn't cut it right, especially the figures, and he began to help me cutting. When he had to go out he collected all the clippings and put them in his desk. 'When I'm back I'll cut out everything for you,' he said. I was frightfully angry because it was my scissors and my cutting-out set that he'd brought home for me. And men ought not to play anyway, they've got to be in their offices and earn money for mothers. So I began to cry. Father got angry and slapped me. But you know, next time he took out the set, I took away one of the clippings and tore it to bits. Then the aeroplane had one wing missing and Father was very angry. I got angry, too, and said it was his fault. Mother said I was right, and why didn't he leave the playthings to me; he was like a little boy. So Mother and Father began to quarrel. He called her stupid and she called him an idiot. Then Mother collected all the clippings and gave them to me. Father jumped up, took the things from me and tore them all to bits. So I began to cry very loudly and Father and Mother began to shout. When we were sitting down at lunch, Father said: 'I don't want to eat.' And Mother snapped back: 'Nor do I.' I thought they were both silly, and

started to eat all by myself. But then I got fed up. I was sorry for them because they had to go hungry.

Anyhow, they didn't buy me any more cutting-out sets. I asked Mother for more rags or scraps of cloth and she said: 'There are no rags and I need all the scraps for replacing the clothes you've torn.' Then I asked Father for a beautiful magazine with lots of pictures of animals—there was a giraffe with an awfully long neck and two very little horns on its head—but he answered: 'Do you think books are made for you to spoil? The day I catch you cutting up a book I'll give you a whacking.' 'But Daddy,' I said, 'you've always given me magazines to cut.' 'Well, that's over now. And if I see you clipping a single paper, I'll throw the scissors out of the window. Stick to sewing, it's time you began to learn the things all women have to know.'

Then one day I snipped off a tiny little bit from the tummy of my rag bear and out of the hole came lots of sawdust. So I pricked it with the stork's bill, and after every prick sawdust ran out. Then I cut up the tummy from one end to the other and there was a whole river of sawdust and the only thing left was the head and the legs. They're stuck on, you know, they look like four sausages and a little ball. Mother was very angry, but I used the bear for a rug for my doll's bed. The tummy is quite flat, just like a mat, and the legs and arms and the head lie on the floor, like the bear rug in front of Aunt Maria's bed. It's she who gave me the sewing-box.

Well, one day I was bored, and because my doll could open and shut her eyes I wanted to know what she had inside. So I cut out one eye I did it very carefully, but it was a glass eye, so it broke into blue bits. Inside there was a little ball of lead and a wire, and you could see the glue where the hairs were stuck on. It was nasty, you know. Father knows everything, so he took the doll and pulled off its wig and stuck on a new eye inside. It was made of a white bean he had painted an eye on. But then the doll was as ugly as those people with a glass eye. Oh, yes! Don't stare! If somebody loses his eye, the doctor puts in a new one of glass to make it look nicer. Of course, you can't see with it, but people who don't know about it believe you can. Sometimes a lady comes to visit us who has a glass eye, and when it's looking at me I pull faces at it. She can't see them and that's great fun.

So one day I put the doll on the kitchen step and when our cook came out she stepped on it and it broke. I began to cry and Mother

was very angry with her and told her she would take the money for a doll out of her wages. And then they bought me a new doll.

But after that, of course, I couldn't cut an eye out of the new doll, so I had to look for other things. First I cut the fringes off the crochet bedspread, and when I played at cooking they were noodles in the soup. Then I cut off our cat's whiskers, at least, wanted to cut them. But when I began, the cat scratched me and Mother saw it and slapped me. Our curtains are made of little round and square bits and I started to cut the threads between them. If you're good at clipping—but you must really be good at it—then you can make stars out of the round bits, and small squares out of the big squares. But Mother gave me a hiding because she noticed it and it was no use telling her that I didn't do it. So I didn't know what to cut or clip.

The last thing I cut was Father's shoe laces, and when he was late the other day and jumped out of bed to go to his office, and couldn't put his shoes on, I got another hiding. So I was terribly bored and angry, because my stork couldn't eat things any more.

But now I've found out something funny and nobody knows. Because it's so warm, Mother leaves little Juan in his bed without any clothes on while she goes out shopping. She tells me to take good care of him and not let him fall out. One day he was sleeping on his back and smiling, with closed fists. He has such white little tummy, with a little hole in the middle. I took the scissors and went on tiptoe very softly, and with the point of the scissors, only with the point you know, I pricked him in the tummy ever so little. You couldn't see it, really. A drop of blood came out, quite red, and stuck there. Baby woke up with a very funny face and started to cry and scratch his tummy. And he smeared the blood all over him with his little fingers. When Mother came back I told her that he'd been stung by something and Mother washed him and took the whole bed to pieces. But she didn't find anything. She said it must have been a spider because our house is so old, and I helped her to look for the spider. Then when Mother was near me, I cried suddenly: 'Here! Mummy, here!' and I started to run. 'It's gone into this hole,' I cried. There was a hole in the plaster of the wall. I said it had been a fat spider, as big as my nail. Afterwards Father filled all the holes in the wall with plaster.

Next day I pricked baby in his bottom because he was sleeping on his tummy, and Mother told Father that the spider had stung the boy a second time. Father said: 'Of course, now we've stopped up their nest they're furious. We shall have to clean out the whole house.' And so Mother passed the whole week moving furniture about and pouring out petrol, and she's found three big spiders.

In a few days I'll give him another prick. I'll tell you beforehand and you must come and watch. It's great fun to see the baby's face. And perhaps one day—but you mustn't tell anybody—one day, you and I will cut up his whole tummy from one end to the other and see what's inside.

(Authorized translation from the Spanish original.)

BRIAN HOWARD

NOTES ON CIVILIANS AT BAY—II

FOUND myself scrambling into the train at Cannes, on June 21st, without one respectable reason in my head. After the Mayor's speech about the unlikelihood of finding a boat, it looked as if the only result would be to meet the German Army somewhat sooner. I waved a hasty good-bye to a woman friend, Leona R., with whom I had left the two letters to be forwarded should I never reach England, and turned back into a half-empty train, and what seemed the gloomiest railway carriage in the world. I did not know it, but there had been a gloomier one, an hour or two earlier, at Compiègne. In it, there had sat the new Emperor of Europe, so mad with pride, embarrassment, natural rudeness, and lack of the French language, that he could not lift his eyes, or his thick police-spy's hands off his stomach, or speak one word.

Some time before midnight, we edged into Marseille Station, where there were only one or two lights burning, near the exit at the far end: the place was unusually hollow and hushed. The only decision I had been able to make was to go to bed at the *Terminus*, the station hotel, but just as I was getting out of the carriage, off

went the sirens. Instantly, the few lights were extinguished, and a blind, but steady hustle began for the underground passageway connecting the platforms. It was the first serious raid of my life, and I was attentive. On the way down, an elderly Englishwoman asked a question, in precisely the tone she would have used in the South Kensington museum: 'Is this the shelter for the English?' In a way, of course, it was. Once jammed in their stuffy passage and trickling with heat, people became moderately cheerful, often pausing momentarily in their conversation after each explosion. I noticed that the bombardment of a city sounds, from underneath, exactly as if large doors are being firmly shut at the other end of a large house; not slammed, but closed with determination. The station was not hit, and soon I found myself in one of the characterless but melancholy bedrooms of the *Terminus*, just above.

The next morning was heavy and grey. I felt a pressing desire for action, and yet, apparently, not pressing enough; I could think of nothing to do. Looking down between my iron shutters at the station taxi rank, it occurred to me to be relieved that there were no Nazi motor-cycles. I came downstairs to find the terrace, the little perched garden of the hotel, looking quite extraordinary. It resembled an English garden party at which the principal guests had failed to arrive, and everyone has the fidgets. Repeatedly, simultaneously, they stared at one another, and then away, and then at the hotel entrance. Two or three people would get up from one of the little white tables at the same time, and then inexplicably sit down again. It was clear that they were far more frightened—and very reasonably—than they allowed themselves to appear, and the guest who had deserted them was, of course, Britannia, who had never been known to do such a thing before *Never*. The Consul-General had been ordered home by the Government five days before; the banks were shutting at mid-day, the Germans might arrive from one hour to the next; there was no boat, and what, in Heaven's name, was going to be done?

During the morning, one learned that communication had been established with the astonished American Consul. The proper thing, it was said, was to wait and see, and not to leave the hotel. I decided, nevertheless, to risk abandoning the centre of information for as short a time as it would take to try and get some money. I took a taxi to the Westminster Bank, where I contrived

extract, after prolonged consultations, £25 in French money. The bank was in a dignified, but furious, agitation, and considering that they had no idea where their head branch, and my money, was, it was kind of them to give me anything. The banking machine had been running down, for foreigners at least, since the middle of May, and no money had reached me for nearly two months. I asked the chief cashier when the Germans were expected, and he reassured me enormously, though only temporarily, by saying: 'Oh, not for two or three days.' During the ensuing hours I spread this piece of news industriously, but by nightfall I had ceased to believe it, and so, as far as I could judge, had everyone else.

Back at the hotel there was no news. There was one friend of mine from Cannes whom I had lost sight of the night before, and I sought him out. C. R. had been through the last war, and he had acquired a kind of ingrained sensitivity which made the present situation particularly horrible to him. One of his reactions was a very eccentric diet, consisting principally of sleeping pills. I pointed out to him that if we were not to escape by boat, it might be as well to move towards Spain, or Italy. Anything was better than the Gestapo. He agreed, and we decided to devote part of the afternoon to filling out those forms without which one could hardly move from one street to another, ally or no ally. It had been like that since the beginning of the war. Remembering it now, I am sure that this craze for obstruction contributed largely to the general collapse. Every kind of movement or communication, and only a little less so in the case of the French themselves, was held up, or forbidden. It was a kind of unconscious, collective protest against the very fact of being at war, and things eventually came to such a pass that the war itself became the excuse, and the reason, for not fighting it. From the beginning, the mood of the big officials had been filtering through to the little ones, like a descending paralysis. The war had been made so boring to everyone; so puzzling; so censored, and so remote from life, that eventually it really did detach itself from reality, and flickered out, like a gas jet on which someone had intended to keep a pot just simmering, but which they had turned too low. When their back was turned, it went out.

At the office where the travel permits were arranged, I was amazed and delighted to find an acquaintance behind the desk, the

English-speaking grocer from Bandol. He helped us write out the interminable questionnaires, and we decided on Monaco as the only feasible place of retreat, since it was impossible to get into Spain; giving as our reason 'to rejoin our families'. It was all we could think of. (I remember asking the ludicrous question: 'Do you think the Italians will respect Monaco's neutrality?') The applications were to come back, stamped, early the next morning (as a matter of fact they were refused on a technical point), and we returned to the hotel in an easier frame of mind, feeling that if it was our fate to become prisoners of war we could at least manoeuvre ourselves into the kinder clutches of the Italians.

At the *Terminus* I sat on the terrace and reopened the only book I had with me, the *Brothers Karamazov*. I had begun the book some weeks before, and it was giving me very great pleasure. Not only because I found it as good as any novel ever written, but also because I had just finished my first reading of *David Copperfield*, and it had been like finding an adult to talk to after too long with a serious little girl. (Moreover, *Copperfield* is like a play in which the actors and their understudies are all on the stage at the same time.) I failed utterly, however, to keep my eye on the page, and I fell to brooding, instead, on my last visit to Marseilles in January.



I went to Marseille in order to see if I could do anything about getting a great friend released from the central concentration camp for South of France aliens at Les Milles, near Aix. First there was the grotesque difficulty I had in getting from the department of the Var into the Bouches-du-Rhône. The journey from Bandol to Toulon, and then the chasing about all day until, shortly before my train was due to leave, the Commandant of the gendarmerie consented to write out a *Sauf-Conduite Provisoire* for five days with his own hand, remarking as he did so that had I been Russian or Spanish he would have refused it. Next there was the arrival, in the coldest weather for ten—or is it twenty?—years, with the palms going brittle and grey, and a wind in the Cannebière such as I have only met once before, in the Austrian Alps. The tears of cold froze on one's face, and one was blown literally to a standstill. I had a most curious five days. On the second morning at seven o'clock, two *Sûreté* men stumped

to my small bedroom on the top floor of the *Louvre et Paix*, and began asking the usual questions about my papers, *carte d'identité*, &c. They were quite good-natured about it, but decided that, though everything seemed in order, I had better accompany them to their headquarters. I protested that I had spent some time with the Consul-General the preceding evening, but this had no effect. The street outside was covered with ice and snow, so I offered to take them where they wanted to go in a taxi, which they accepted with alacrity. Their headquarters proved to be an old, shabby building just round the far right-hand corner of the *Vieux Port*, beyond the *Fort St. Jean*. Here I waited, in a vast, untidy room, until nearly half-past ten, an object of not the slightest interest to anyone. Innumerable detectives trudged in and out, regarding me with eyes in which speculation always gave way, before they reached the end of the room, to fatigue. At last, someone said I could go. As I rose from my chair, someone else called out, anxiously: 'No, no—the archives.' I sat down again, and during about twenty minutes they searched in their files, behind a closed, distant door; then, without any visible or audible signal, the room was suddenly much more alert, and quiet. Waistcoats were tugged down over stomachs; cigarette ends were round under boots; glances, in my direction, became at the same time sharp and elaborately veiled. Soon, I was asked to walk over to an improvised, roofless cubicle that I had already noticed in a corner. The *Commissaire* would like to see me. As I shut the door of this little sanctum, I noticed six men shiftily form a semicircle outside, each with one hand in his pocket. I became alarmed. Inside, the *Commissaire* politely pointed at a printed document on the desk at which he sat, and said: 'Your name, you see, monsieur.' I looked at the document, and there, sure enough, was my surname, in a list with about twenty others of various nationalities. I thereupon told him that I did not understand what in the world all this was about. He replied:

'I am very sorry, M. Ovah, but there is only one way in which this affair can be settled to our mutual satisfaction. I am afraid I must ask you to give yourself the trouble of baring your left arm.'

I said I would be delighted, and did so. He scrutinized it with the care of a doctor choosing the most advantageous spot for an injection, and then began to apologize. It appeared that these

twenty names, including mine, were all the alibis of a single man whose whereabouts was a source of anxiety to them all, and that he was tattooed on his left arm. The *Commissaire* then rose to his feet, and I was bowed off the premises. On the way down to the street, I was accompanied by the nicer of the two original detectives, a rather thwarted type. He began to complain:

'As a police area,' he said, sadly, 'Marseille is about four times the size of Paris, and yet we, the police, are about ten times fewer. It's quite hopeless. There is nothing to be done. If you, for instance, wish to commit a murder here, you can. Nothing simpler, I assure you.'

'Why?' I asked.

'Because if you will take the precaution of committing somewhere on the periphery of Marseille, you will have plenty of time to go to the opposite point of the periphery before we can get there. You would be able to go to another town, in fact, comfortably. We simply can't get anywhere in time. They've made it too big, Marseille.'

Shaking his head solemnly, he wished me good-bye, and began to pick his way back, along the ice-filled gutter, to his aggravating occupation.

On the same day, I went to the Consulate, to ask for an introduction to the General in command of the district, and I recounted my morning's experience. I was then told of an incident which made me thankful that nothing worse had befallen. It shed a fresh light, also, on Marseille's uncontrollability. For various reasons, Marseille had lately become more than usually important as an Allied war centre. One day, there arrived an eminent member of the Egyptian Government, and he went for a walk. On his way, he found it necessary to visit a *pisssoir*, and while he was there, some small boys let off a firecracker outside. Instantly, police flew out of a neighbouring building, towed the startled official away, beat him up, broke his nose, and incarcerated him for several days. The Consulate naturally sent for the Chief of the Marseille police, but all that happened was that he became increasingly evasive, and then vaguely impertinent. A large pile of angry correspondence between the French and Egyptian Governments, the fruits of this mishap, was pointed out to me.

The Consul was good enough to give me a letter to the General Chief of Staff, and I went to call. Marseille is a city of endless

secrets and surprises, and one of them is that it conceals a quantity of very beautiful private houses. This is not immediately apparent from the streets, as at Aix, and when I rang at the address I had been given I was unprepared to walk into a moderately sized eighteenth-century house of the most charming description imaginable. The officer I was seeking was in the hall, just about to go out. I wish, now, that I had arrived a moment later, when he had gone, because the next few minutes were to hold one of the most piercing instances of disappointment and frustration I have known.

The officer was in a hurry, but extremely considerate. I had a letter from the English Consul? Good. The General was out, but perhaps he could arrange matters for me himself? I wanted someone released from the Camp at Les Milles? Did I say that the military tribunal at the Camp had pronounced in favour of this liberation last October? Of course. Oh well, nothing could be simpler. As if it were the most natural thing in the world, he walked across the black and white marble floor of the little hall to a telephone, and said: 'I'll just ring up the Camp, and let them know.' I stood there transfixed, sweating. A quarter of a year's work was about to be rewarded. Justice was going to be done. So lightly, so pleasantly, so quickly—like a wink. As he lifted the receiver, there was a tap on the front door, and an orderly brushed past me to open it. The General came in, massively.

He was large, and very deliberate, with intimidatingly good manners. The officer ushered us both into a shadowy, oval room with gilt *boiseries*, and a few pieces of furniture ranged strictly against the walls. The General seated himself carefully in a frail eighteenth-century chair on one side of the tall window, and I did the same on the other. He was about seventy, I judged, and his face, while intelligent and not unimpressive, had something in it which I felt made it habitually easier for him to say 'No' than 'Yes'. There was something a little too *rusé* about it, too. I explained the situation, and, as I did so, I noticed that the officer (who stood beside him) had begun, almost imperceptibly, to fret. I realized, with a sagging heart, that all was over—that the moment had passed. I concluded my statement quickly, and thanked him for having given me his time.

'Write to me, *cher monsieur*,' said the General, with cold geniality, picking up his glittering oak-leaved hat; 'just write

me a letter with the full facts of the case. I will do all that is possible.'

I was shortly to discover that not only did he do nothing at all but expressed his intention of doing nothing, very tersely, a day or so after the interview. This, in spite of the fact that my friend had been judged worthy of being given back his freedom by tribunal consisting of this old creature's own subordinates, and three months before. I saw the document myself. This incident occurred two months before the law of *prestation* was applied to refugees of German origin, and there was no excuse whatsoever. Incidentally, I have heard people put forward a case for *prestation*, but I see none. It had been invented the preceding spring, in flagrant contravention of international usage, for the Spanish Republican refugees, and consisted in extorting labour, on public and military works, in return for sanctuary. France could still offer freedom to refugees from tyranny, but only inside a labour camp. No notice was taken of individual talent or capability, or the fact that a refugee had enough money to live on. The magnificent hundred-year-old tradition of France as the asylum of the persecuted was, in fact, thrown away for the sake of a few extra fences, ditches and stables. But then, the whole treatment of the German political refugees—from the beginning of the war in France, and now, here, miserably enough, although the authorities show signs of returning sanity—is one which might have been personally contrived by Goebbels.

I see that I have wandered some way from my musings on the *Terminus* terrace, during that first day of the flight. Or have I? These matters are hardly ever out of my mind, and no doubt they were there then.



On the second morning of waiting, Sunday, the 23rd, there was still no news, and the atmosphere began to change. People walked about the lobby faster, and more aimlessly; the buttonholing by old ladies grew more tenacious. During the past week, the tempo of worry and uneasiness had fussed along at an even pace; now it was rising, hourly, towards undisguised desperation. Whereas the day before, for example, hardly anyone had dared leave the *Terminus* for fear of missing the all-important announcement, little groups were now darting off in taxis every few minutes on mysterious, back-to-the-wall missions.

I knew that if the permits for Monaco were not refused, they could be called for at the last moment, and anyway I had decided not to use mine until all hope of a boat had entirely gone. Meanwhile, the necessity for some kind of further, more private, action had become overwhelming. It was time to prepare for the worst. I remembered that I had the address of Kisling, the painter, a man who knew the South of France like the back of his hand, and I suggested to C. R. that we should go and ask his advice. Kisling had been of the greatest assistance to me during the winter, having consented to come forward as the chief French guarantor for my interned friend. He lived in the *Vieux Port*, and on the way we walked past part of the air-raid damage. One block of apartment houses, a few doors away from his studio, had been completely demolished. The studio itself was ravishing—a room on the second floor, stretching the whole length of an old house, with a huge window opening directly on the centre of the waterfront. Two built-in alcoves contained the bed and the bath, and the walls were covered with the kind of odds and ends—advertisements, unfinished drawings, photographs, bits of wood, bits of stuff—which I always find disproportionately moving. Such rooms are associated very strongly in my mind with France, and with happiness. He appeared from the bathroom, beaming like a smooth, perfumed, hospitable bear, and I felt encouraged to put our case, although I suspected that he himself had worries enough with his Jewish-Austrian brother-in-law. As we talked, we all three occasionally sidled over to the open window, and gazed up to the entrance of the *Cannebière* for any signs of the Germans. About myself, I told him that I had once been warned by the German Embassy in London; that six years ago Unity Mitford had advised me to leave Munich because the Gestapo had come to know of my anti-Hitler sympathies, and that what I was concerned about was less the fact of my being an Englishman of internable age than that the Gestapo might take over Marseille exactly as they had taken over Paris. It seemed highly likely. Kisling thereupon suggested the buying of false papers. He said that Marseille was the ideal city of Europe in which to hide, and that a month or so as Mexicans or South Americans brought up in England would give both myself and C. R. time in which to arrange an escape to Spain, or North Africa. We at once agreed, and an appointment was made to meet him for lunch at the

Restaurant Beauvau, where it was hoped that someone that he knew who could arrange these things could be found.

Walking back towards the *Cintra*, I remembered that I had already met a Monsieur Bori, one of the men who 'arranged things', also at the *Beauvau*, in January. It had been on my way out of the Consulate that G., an old acquaintance, peered warily round a corner at me. I had always associated him with the most elegantly raffish circles in London and Paris, and his gold braid and medals took me somewhat aback. 'Oh, Brian,' he said, 'I saw you yesterday when you came, but I thought you probably wanted *help*—you know, all these appalling English people who come bothering around wanting *help*, too frightful—so I hid. But since I saw you with the Consul himself I gather it's alright?' I asked him to lunch and on the way G. told me about the Marseille gangsters. Nothing, it appeared, could be done without them. Not only was it impossible to live in Marseille unless one got on with them, but the great point was that they were so absolutely delicious. As people, you know. He made their power seem so universal that I began to wonder whether perhaps these Real Rulers of Marseille would care to do anything about getting deserving cases out of concentration camps. At lunch, G. amiably introduced me to M. Bori, a very important Real Ruler. I was told that M. Bori shared the control of Marseille night life with someone named quite simply, Jesus Christ. M. Christ kept a tiny *pompes funèbres* shop in the daytime, but there were no words to describe the majesty and alarm which attended his nocturnal round of inspection.

Now that I was about to visit the *Beauvau* again, I regretted not having cultivated my Real Rulers with greater assiduity. My last memory of M. Bori was that of sitting beside him in a night club, tongue-tied, and in a state of quite unreasonable apprehension. I was sure that I couldn't have left a very encouraging impression, and yet here I was about to ask him, or someone he would probably know, to provide me with a false identity.

(*To be continued*)

TERENCE HEYWOOD

SOME NOTES ON ENGLISH BAROQUE

'Exuberant sweets o'erwhelm, as torrents, tongue and pen.'—BENLOWES

BAROQUE is so essentially a Catholic Latin manifestation that the nature of its impingement on the Protestant Teutonic North is curiously instructive. As regards the visual arts there is probably less in England than in Holland or even in Sweden. But if few of our buildings can be labelled as unquestionably baroque, there are many, like St. Paul's, which are partly so or have been infused with something of the spirit. One can see the beginnings in the flourishes of some of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean designs: in gables and chimney-pieces, in elaborate heraldry over doorways, in certain ornate porches, in the formal garden with topiary work and gazebos, in the strange finials found on stone manor-houses in Yorkshire and the Cotswolds, and especially in a structure like the quaint Triangular Lodge at Ruston, Northants, symbolizing the Trinity—a building reminiscent of the patterned poems of Quarles, Herbert and Wither. It flowers most notably in such Inigo Jones' creations as York Stairs on the Embankment and (if it be his) the porch of St. Mary's, Oxford; in much of Wren's work; and in the megalomaniacal Vanburgh of Blenheim and Castle Howard. But in this country there could be no organized reaction against classical authoritarianism, for such had never existed: the broken outline, the uncleanness, the lack of frontality were there already; palladianism merely grew up alongside.

Though critics are inclined to strain tendencies and poets are too often hustled into schools, there was undoubtedly an analogous development in literature: from Euphuism, the prose of Wotton, and Petrarchan concettists (including Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare, Spenser and a whole host of sonneteers), to the Metaphysicals, the emblematicists, and prose-writers like Browne, Burton and Felltham. A distinct school of poets forming a link

between the Metaphysicals and the Middle Ages can, moreover, be recognized in the Recusants, although it very rarely has been. And in Robert Southwell, the greatest of them, we find what for obvious reasons we cannot expect to in our architecture: namely strong direct Jesuit influences. The profound effect of Easter imagery² as exerted through the Bible (a subject too little explored) is another point well worth remembering in this connection.

Numerous parallels between typical stylistic forms in the different arts of the period suggest themselves: the ingenious epigram, for example, at which many at that time excelled, may, as Mario Praz has observed, be taken as the literary counterpart of false perspective in architecture. But the idea of twisted shafts seems to me one of the most illuminating: parallels may be found in El Greco's tortured skies, the trance-distorted features of Spanish mystics, Bernini's (not to mention Berruguete's) restless statues writhing out of their niches, the astonishing twists Donne gave to his conceits, the tortuous progress of his rhythms, and indeed he prose the spiral movement of *stile coupé*—its wonderful gyrating ascension complete with dangling participles like elaborate complices or volutes. 'Nerve-stretching music!' cries Benlowes, 'Make arts thy tributaries, twist heart, tongue and pen'; Herbert describes how he

Sought out quaint words and trim invention;
 [His] thoughts began to burnish, sprout and swell,
 Curling with metaphors a plain intention,
 Decking the sense as if it were to sell;

and Dryden must have sensed the motion when he defined Clevelandism as 'wresting and torturing a word into another meaning'. The action is that of a gimlet; or to use a phrase of Wölfflin's, it is 'recessional presentment'.

A baroque feeling then was already in the English atmosphere when Crashaw began to release those 'loose ecstasies' and

¹ Lord David Cecil, for instance, betrays no awareness of these poets as a group in his recent *Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, which nevertheless appears full year after Guiney's Recusant anthology.

² How few, for example, realize that Donne's famous compass conceit almost exactly paralleled in Omar Khayyam!

Swollen rhapsodies
 Whose flourish (meteor-like) doth curl the air
 With flash of high-born fancies.

Alongside the poetical edifices of Donne and other Metaphysicals, which may be said to reflect in varying degrees a sort of Barocco-Palladian compromise, the florid piles of Crashaw sprouted into existence revealing showy façades which, on examination, were found to be non-structural, decorative screens unrelated to the interiors. It is this and their direct Roman Catholic inspiration that distinguishes them from the former group.

So, Crashaw, once considered as just another Metaphysical, has in recent years been detached from the Donne school and been accorded an increasingly isolated position among his compatriots. The process has been necessary, but the refinement was in danger of being carried rather too far. Hence the pleasure of finding that, in this admirable new study¹ of the man and his poetry, his affinities with Southwell and smaller people like Giles Fletcher and certain emblematisists have been sketched, although his relation to Benlowes and some of the lesser Recusant poets might also perhaps have been indicated.

The main purpose of this book is 'to translate the modern reader into the position of one who, three centuries ago, was informed upon the principal movements in English and Continental religion and art, and conversant with Latin, Italian and English poetry'. A notable result is that Crashaw now emerges as a much less original poet than one had supposed. This is less because many of his poems are translations (however free) than because his conceits, oxymora and paradoxes are nearly all shown to have been the stock property of the *Seicento* Catholic literature in which he had so thoroughly steeped himself. 'The most notorious images lose their element of surprise when they have been seen half-a-dozen times' in other poets, wrote T. O. Beachcroft some years ago; and if, as Marino himself insisted, the aim of the baroque poet is to surprise ('È del poeta il fin la maraviglia'), then Donne (who, one too often forgets, never quite outgrew his Romanism) is in this respect infinitely more successful. Indeed, Mr. Warren rather convincingly demonstrates how (and this in

¹ Richard Crashaw: *A Study in Baroque Sensibility*. Austin Warren. Louisiana State University Press. \$3.

itself is a paradox!) Crashaw so far from arresting actually aims at a hypnoidal or ecstatic state by his repetitions of rhymes and stock figures, his use of assonance and dissonance, and his incantatory rhythms. 'The hypnotic intent,' he holds, 'has been little observed because most English readers have, in preoccupation and attitude, been too alien to him for the establishment of initial confidence.'

Just how exclusively Crashaw may be said to belong to the Catholic, Continental, Counter-Reformation tradition is a question more difficult to decide. Mr. Warren agrees with George Williamson's contention that Crashaw, in what are apparently his later poems (*The Epiphany*, the Letter to the Countess of Denbigh, and the famous concluding passage added to *The Flaming Heart*) was moving away from Marinism to the organic conceit as used by Donne—a change he puts down to the development in his religious life, as indicated by the turn from St. Teresa to Dionysius the Areopagite.

So here is another of those poets who would have written so differently if only he had lived a bit longer? If (the 'holy ardour of his soul overheating his body') he had not died one April day in Loreto in his middle thirties? Fortunately, baroque no longer needs an apology; nor, with such delicious Crashavian examples as we have, need we speculate concerning others that might have been produced. For anyone who aims at a better understanding of one of our most colourful and European poets here is the very book.

SELECTED NOTICES

Franz Schubert and his Merry Friends. By Opal Wheeler and Sybil Deucher. Illustrated by Mary Greenwalt. Faber & Faber. 6s.
This book is primarily for children to whom music (and piano-playing) is not a duty, but a pleasure. Its appeal is therefore rather limited—but it would be a triumph if it could help to convert some young duty-musicians to the real thing.

It describes with naive simplicity and good humour the happy side of Schubert's short and productive life. It pictures the little Viennese, almost too much of a prodigy, in his home, at school, and among his riotous friends, always gay, always agreeable,

always with his head full of melodies, and usually short of notepaper. It is a children's story with music as its main theme. We are told little that is not connected with Schubert as a composer, and the most trivial, every-day events have a musical significance forced upon them. We are told little about the real Schubert, about his tremendous admiration for Beethoven, about his pathetic poverty, about his abrupt death, for the book does not set out to be a biography. It tells a clear and simple story about the Schubert who wrote the *German dances*, and *Rosamunde*, and the Waltzes and Military Marches, about the little boy who wrote on a tablecloth when there was no notepaper to be had, about the chubby, black schoolmaster who wrote one hundred and fifty songs, a string quartet, some symphonies and four operas in one year, while his pupils were getting on with their reading.

The most attractive thing about this book are its musical selections, which include many of the more popular piano pieces, and some songs and themes from orchestral works, all easy to play. They are—like the rest of the book—delightfully printed and already half justify the cost of the book.

The drawings, although they lack a little in life and subtlety, are ingenious and well adapted to the style.

Let us hope that *Schubert and his Merry Friends*, which is the fourth of a series (Bach, Haydn and Mozart have already been treated), may be followed by many more volumes of its kind, and that these may help many children to enjoy music and many parents and relations to solve the problem of birthday and Christmas presents.

P. R. PAUL

Pleasures and Speculations. Walter de la Mare. Faber & Faber. 15s.

In this collection of Mr. de la Mare's essays, gathered together over a long period of time, books are the theme and life provides the asides. Together with his appreciation of works, famous or forgotten, he gives many a clue to the exquisite craftsmanship and odd scholarliness of his own creative genius, and some important indications of his literary values, especially in those essays where he discusses the right way to use words, the varied rhythms of prose and poetry, and the differences which distinguish the intellectual imagination from that of the visionary.

Speculations lead to beguiling research. Mr. de la Mare makes rare collection of the flowers the poets praised ; he carefully

examines the language of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, in order to find what parts of it Shakespeare really wrote; he peruses the maps of those countries that border 'strange seas of thought' and calls to mind the travellers' tales of the Elizabethan adventurers. Some of his speculations seem akin to those of Thomas Browne, as when he marvels at animal types in human beings, and asks whether hen-like old ladies have an exceptional distaste for their foxy fellow-humans; or when he wonders what happened to Scheherazade's children, born during that odyssey of tale-telling and never heard of more.

Memory and conjecture combine to give the poet's critical prose that same air of nostalgic regret which so characterizes his creative works. He is sad that the 'tumult of life's dark waters' must wash away so much of what was delicious in the past from the notice of the fashionable present—a present whose expense he is gently ironical. Behind his scrutiny of literature there are many signs that present-day frailties do not escape his observation. He deplores the use of sawdust words 'which express real and active and quite respectable things : lifelessly, as, for example, democracy'. Lingering pleasureableness over the names of the naturalists, Waterton, White of Selborne, Gerard, and Hudson, he warns the sophisticated, who are apt to prefer more worldly amusement, that to watch moth or to robin is not by any means the most foolish way to spend one's time. 'Even although our fellow-humans possess souls not always conspicuous, and minds, not invariably attractive, and tongues at times tedious, they, too, are only dressed-up mammalia; their habits are familiar.'

Mr. de la Mare's fine prose is as infinitely varied, as minute and delicately embroidered, as might have been a sampler worked by his own charming Midget. It is patterned with company of poets, travellers, story-tellers, naturalists, and world-worshippers. From the leisured reflections of this most musical of present-day writers we may learn something of the techniques behind his art, something of the sources of his own quiet wisdom. For him, indeed, 'the honeysuckle his mind's delight' and the glories he aspires to are not concerned with the breaking of nations, instead they build monuments that cannot fall.

DOROTHY BAKER